

disques

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disques

FOR MAY

1932

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EVERY now and then disturbed readers, anxious to upset our peace of mind, write in to accuse us of overlooking some outstanding foreign recordings. These complaints, in many cases, have been well founded, and the polite abuse liberally sprinkled upon us has been justly earned. No one, however, seems to have remarked, or at least indignantly called our attention to, the fact that we have also neglected some highly interesting and eminently worth while domestic recordings. It is a melancholy fact, but a true one. Worse yet, it is also an unavoidable one. The oversight results from nothing more nefarious than space restrictions—an annoying matter that the general reader commonly suspects is only a convenient excuse invented solely to justify committed errors. Nevertheless, it is a sober fact that *Disques* has to be content with reviewing only what, for lack of a better term, can be called the “better” records—records, that is, which grace the so-called celebrity lists. But these celebrity lists are not the only lists issued by the domestic manufacturers; they represent, in point of fact, only a very small part of the activities of the larger phonograph companies. Besides the records of symphonic, vocal, chamber and operatic music,

the manufacturers also issue a vast quantity of popular records, records intended solely for the foreign born, records made for export purposes, and race records. With the exception of the popular records, the discs on these other lists are generally issued so quietly and unostentatiously that the average collector does not even know of their existence. To handle all these records in *Disques* would require a great deal of space, far more, indeed, than we have available, and so no attempt has been made to deal with records other than those that are supposed to represent the more laudable efforts of the phonograph companies. Moreover, it is true that only a small proportion of the records on these other lists would be of general interest or would appeal very strongly to any audiences other than those for which they were expressly intended.

Yet now and then some fine recordings pop up on these other lists, and they deserve to be called to the attention of the public—all the more so because so many of them are never given adequate publicity. Many of them are never mentioned in the supplements or included in the catalogues, so that it is only natural that comparatively few people know about them. Very few people are at all

familiar with, to cite but one fairly obvious example, the contents of the Victor International List, on which occasionally can be found some extremely interesting records. Only a small number of dealers stock these records, and those that do often tend to neglect them, allowing them to be buried away on obscure shelves where they generally remain undisturbed unless some collector, more curious and enterprising than the ordinary, happens to know about them and asks for them. Yet there must be a great many people who would thoroughly enjoy some of these discs if they were only properly brought to their attention. The International List's best features, of course, are the recordings of so-called "light" music—waltzes, operatic potpourris arranged for small orchestras, selections from Viennese operettas and German musical films, etc. Such music may not rank very high, but there are times when it is quite pleasant to listen to, and provided it be well done it is right and fitting that there should be plenty of recordings of it. The domestic recordings of this sort of music only too often are so overburdened with vibraphone solos, mawkish violin solos, guitar passages, and such spurious tinklings that the result is indescribably cheap and tawdry and not worth listening to.

But such foreign orchestras as those presided over by Marek Weber and Dol Dauber (Victor) and Dajos Bela and Edith Lorand (Columbia) give us light music in a genuinely pleasing and skilful fashion, and usually in excellent taste. Some of their records are pretty bad, of course, but the best of them are highly entertaining. Such records as Weber's recording of excerpts from Suppé's *Boccaccio* (issued last month by Victor), Dauber's recording of a fox-trot and tango from the film *Ein Mädel von der Reeperbahn*, some of the 10-inch tangos by the Dajos Bela orchestra on the Odeon list, and the music from Johann Strauss' *Fledermaus* and *Gypsy Baron* by the Edith Lorand orchestra, also on the Odeon list—such records need no apologies. Those who condemn them the most vigorously can often be observed guiltily listening to them behind closed doors. More recondite and less accessible than the International List but equally interesting are the various foreign language records. Both Victor and Columbia each month put out a number of records intended for the Spanish, Germans, French, Italians, Hungarians and many others. Not infrequently these lists contain records of more than ordinary interest.



There are, too, the export lists of the various companies. These are records designed primarily for South American consumption. In this field Columbia and Victor lead. They seem to have the most abundant lists, and often they contain items that are well calculated to interest the average record collector. The Victor list has been rather barren of late, being in most cases just a duplication of the regular domestic supplements, but only a few months ago it yielded several Spanish zarzuelas, done by genuine Spanish artists, and there is also a small but very enjoyable series of operettas by Franz Lehár and Oscar Straus. Of the zarzuelas, perhaps the most interesting is Caballero's *El Dúo de la Africana*, issued on five 12-inch black label records in album set S-7. This piece, recorded in Spain by Spanish artists, is full of lively, engaging tunes, and it is superbly performed and recorded. Less interesting but nevertheless well worth investigating are *Bohemios* by Amadeo Vives, *La Viejecita* by the composer of *El Dúo de la Africana* and *Marina* by Arrieta (this work, first written as a zarzuela, was subsequently made

into an opera; on the Victor export list it is available in zarzuela form, while on the Columbia export list it can be heard in operatic form). The musical value of these zarzuelas, of course, does not approach the value of the sort of music that is included in most of the Victor, Brunswick and Columbia album sets, but they have a certain charm and interest in that they give us something that we could not get elsewhere—not unless we were able to undertake a trip to Spain. Many of the best recordings of the various companies are of familiar masterworks that can easily be heard several times each concert season, and therefore, valuable as they may be to those who live far away from the great musical centers, to many collectors they haven't the charm of some recordings of other music that may be less meritorious but also less familiar. It is getting so easy—perhaps dangerously easy—to hear good music these days that our ears are exposed to the danger of growing jaded; masterpieces that once seemed fresh and enchanting lose their original lustre and glow; performances that under other circumstances might have seemed magnificent are taken more or less as a matter of course. The pious belief that great music can be heard any number of times without appreciable damage is not altogether true. Repetition, carried to excessive lengths, can have worse effects than not hearing the music at all. In the one, a masterpiece is spoiled for us; in the other, there is an experience to be looked forward to.

The Lehár and Straus operettas, abridged of course, are the *Count of Luxembourg* by the former and the *Chocolate Soldier* by the latter. Both of these recordings, though made in New York, are sung in Spanish. But Viennese operetta sung in Spanish is by no means so incongruous as it might at first seem. These recordings also have the salient advantage of not being unduly expensive: 75c for the 10-inch and \$1.25 for the 12-inch are the comparatively modest prices asked. These zarzuelas and operettas, incidentally, were reviewed in *Disques*.

The field of relatively unfamiliar records is much too broad, of course, to be covered at all adequately in a few brief paragraphs, and so the next best thing under the circumstances would be to advise any readers interested to investigate some of the lists themselves.

This has been an unusually dull Winter so far as the monthly supplements are concerned. Both in Europe and America of late the companies seem to have done very little recording, and in consequence there have been no outstanding and wholly unexpected releases for some months. This condition is hardly likely to last very long, and in fact by the time these words appear in print there may be advance news of all sorts of exciting sets being prepared for early release.* But at the moment things are indisputably pretty sluggish. Meanwhile, those who are languishing because of the draught might profitably explore some of the less familiar lists.



Coming now to the matter of popular music, we are on fairly familiar ground. Popular records are stocked by all dealers, and they are conspicuously featured in the supplements. They are also reviewed in many magazines and newspapers.

* The appearance, shortly after these words had gone to the printer, of the Skryabin and Carpenter works—noticed under Orchestra and Choral in this issue—bears out the truth of this statement.

The vast majority of these records, to be sure, offer nothing extraordinary; they are merely good recordings of music that will be whistled today and forgotten tomorrow.

There is, however, one notable exception, and that is Duke Ellington, who has made so many records for various companies. Ellington of late has become immensely popular, and some of his admirers believe much of his work to be genuinely distinguished and significant. Certainly it departs widely from the banal slush that constitutes the vast majority of jazz records. Ellington will be the subject of the leading article for next month. The author, Mr. R. D. Darrell, has been a close follower of Ellington's activities during the past five years, and so is thoroughly familiar with his subject. If there be those who feel that such a subject is not of sufficient dignity to be included in these pages, it is suggested that they listen to some of Ellington's remarkable records before the next issue of *Disques* appears. They may be agreeably surprised.



While on the subject of records off the beaten paths, it may not be amiss to mention here two masterpieces that have recently appeared on the Columbia lists. Under what category they properly belong we do not know—perhaps most logically under the humorous type, a field which has been wisely neglected by the companies in recent months. The records to which we refer were made by Aimée Semple McPherson Hutton and her husband, David Hutton. The first one—C-2561D—was released last Fall, and if the newspaper reports of the activities of this incomparable pair of comic characters have amused you, then C-2561D ought to be on your shelves. The side labelled "Aimée Semple McPherson Hutton and David Hutton" is the better. Of their latest disc—C-2627D—it is difficult to speak. On one side Aimée shouts something she calls the "Crucifixion," with organ accompaniment and astonishing sound effects, while on the reverse she is

(Continued on page 113)

SUBSCRIPTIONS, INDEX AND BOUND VOLUMES

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CODE

The first letters in the record number indicate the manufacturer and all records are domestic releases unless the word **IMPORTED** appears directly under the number: B-Brunswick, C-Columbia, CH-Christschall, D-Decca, EB-Edison-Bell, FO-Fonotopia, G-National Gramophonic Society, HO-Homocord, O-Odeon, PA-Parlophon, PD-Polydor, R-Regal (English), and V-Victor.

The Songs of Charles Tomlinson Griffes

By WILLIAM TREAT UPTON

There seems little question that Charles Tomlinson Griffes was the first among American song-writers definitely to cut adrift from traditional usage and follow the so-called modernistic trend then becoming so pronounced in contemporary music (particularly as regards the latter day French and Russians) and thus to experience for himself the zest of exploring those fields of musical adventure so alluring to his European colleagues.

This appears all the more unusual when we realize that Griffes' early training had been exclusively German and that he had written many songs in the accepted German manner—songs reflecting the idiom of Brahms and Strauss, and yet far from being imitations of their style, rather a differing individual expression of the same general type. Griffes was always so earnest in what he did, so single-minded in his creative work, that when interested in any particular type of expression he gave himself up whole-heartedly to its influence and for the time being became its authentic mouthpiece.

This fact is well illustrated in the case of the *Five German Poems* for Solo Voice with Piano Accompaniment (his earliest published songs, 1909), which were written during his student days in Germany and which he always regarded as more or less crude and immature. Yet so thoroughly had he absorbed the spirit of the best type of German song of that day, that, short and unpretentious as they are, they still present the very essence of the German *lied*. This is not to say, of course, that there are not in these early songs many individual passages betraying the rather saccharine influence of the romanticism of the time; but taken altogether they form a far from negligible group of German songs. Particularly effective are the second and fourth—*Auf geheimem Waldespfade* (Lenau) and *Der träumende See* (Mosen).

With the three *Tone Images* for a Mezzo-Soprano Voice with Piano Accompaniment, Op. 3 (1915), we begin to sense a change, particularly in the first two, written to texts by Oscar Wilde. The first of these, *La Fuite de la Lune*, while still reminding us of Strauss (notably in the broad cantilena in the piano score at the top of the last page) begins to show a developing mysticism in Griffes' style—as for instance in the dissolving harmonies at the words, "Wrapped in a veil of yellow gauze." This tendency we find intensified in the second song, *Symphony in Yellow*. The all-pervasive yellow of Wilde's verses is transmuted in the music into a vague, indeterminate harmonization, perfectly fitting the mood and, withal, handled with great skill. The older type of romanticism seems now to have completely disappeared and we find an impressionistic technique as far as the poles from the earlier idiom of the *Five German Poems*. The third number of this Op. 3, *We'll to the Woods and Gather May* (W. E. Henley), furnishes one of the few examples in all Griffes' songs of natural exuberance of spirits, of unrestrained gayety.

In the case of the next published song, *This Book of Hours* (Walter Crane) from *Two Rondels* for a Soprano Voice with Piano Accompaniment, Op. 4 (1915),

the treatment is modal in character, almost austere in effect. No greater contrast could be conceived than that between this song and the *Symphony in Yellow*. Where that was vague, mystic, atmospheric, this is clean-cut, thin in texture, cameo-like in the distinctness and delicacy of its lines. Its studied simplicity, its cool sophistication, mirror to a nicety Crane's meticulously balanced lines.

The second of the *Two Rondels, Come, Love, across the Sunlit Land* (Clinton Scollard) shows also a touch of modal influence, although the song as a whole is characterized by a buoyant and engaging lyricism. An especially distinctive feature is the ingenious manner in which the piano score is sharply differentiated from the voice part and yet forms the most attractive setting for it, something as Fauré has done in his *Clair de Lune*. The rhythmic interplay of the two parts is extremely attractive.

II

Written the next year (1916) but not published until 1918, are the *Three Poems* for Voice and Piano, Op. 9—*In a Myrtle Shade* (William Blake), *Wai Kiki* (Rupert Brooke) and *Phantom* (Arturo Giovannitti).

The first of these, *In a Myrtle Shade*, is as atmospheric as the *Symphony in Yellow*, but entirely different in treatment. It is perhaps the most elusive of all Griffes' songs. One is gripped by it, yet scarcely knows why. The symbolism of Blake's verses speaks through the music in the gentlest, most wistful manner. In none of his songs has Griffes shown a more sensitive feeling for expressive diction. "Oh, how weak and weary"—could this be better handled, technically or emotionally? The perfect agreement between the sung and spoken phrase, the expressiveness of the intervals of the melody, the absolute appropriateness of the underlying harmonization, the simplicity and charm of the melodic passage-work in the piano score—all these are just what they should be. Indeed these two measures show in miniature the perfection of Griffes' art. With this song we find our composer definitely committed to a modernistic technique. It may vary in speech and style, but the old type romanticism has gone from him forever.

How complete was this breaking away from former methods—how pronounced the pioneer element in his work at this stage of his career—can best be measured, perhaps, if we note a few of the more distinctive American songs composed at about this same time.

In 1918, when Griffes published *In a Myrtle Shade* and the rest of Opp. 9 and 11, there also appeared *Into a Ship, Dreaming* (Walter de la Mare) by Bainbridge Crist, a song whose artistry in the use of a subtle chromaticism and the intimate fitting of the music to the imaginative spirit of the text is scarcely to be surpassed anywhere; Alice Barnett's *Nightingale Lane*, which catches the buoyant lilt of William Sharp's verses and is distinguished for its delicacy of line and sharp drawing; the *Three Songs* for High Voice by Frederick Jacobi (poems by Sarojini Naidu): *The Faery Isle of Janjira*, of fascinating rhythm and aristocratic charm, the dark colored, thick textured *Love and Death*, perhaps more than any other of these songs similar to the type which Griffes was so soon to develop, and the lyric *In the Night*.

Also published at different times but written at this same period were Emerson

Whithorne's impressive setting (with the *marche funèbre* motif) of Walt Whitman's *Invocation*; A. Walter Kramer's *Swans* (Sara Teasdale); Richard Hageman's *Do not go, my Love* (Tagore); and but little earlier, if any, John Alden Carpenter's *Water Colors*.

These are all thoroughly musicianly songs, many of them no less admirable than the songs of Griffes with which we are comparing them—but how absolutely and entirely different, both in matter and manner.

And as we study further the songs which follow *In a Myrtle Shade*, it becomes ever increasingly evident that here speaks a new voice indeed in American song.

Wai Kiki, the second song in Op. 9, is cast in a more heroic mold than is *In a Myrtle Shade*. There are strong impassioned melodies in the piano score which remind us somewhat of similar passages in *La Fuite de la Lune*, except that in the present instance the harmonies are more pungent, often blocked out in fourths and fifths, sometimes of almost polytonal character, showing strong Stravinsky influence. It is a powerful song of highly individualized character, with certain imaginative and pictorial touches of great interest—as at the words, “and stabs with pain the night's brown savagery.” Vivid suggestions of native Hawaiian music recur also throughout the song. Idiomatically it strongly resembles *The White Peacock* (for piano) published a year earlier (1917).

Phantom, completing this opus, is a phantasmagoric creation well depicting “the wild-eyed hours of brooding revery.” Toward the end of the song, however, occurs one of Griffes' most winsome phrases—“And hear thee sing again that old sweet song.” Once more we see his constructive skill in introducing this brief moment of relief from the prevailing gloom.

III

With *Three Poems* by Fiona MacLeod in Musical Settings for High Voice with Piano Accompaniment, Op. 11 (also 1918), we reach Griffes' *magnum opus* as far as song-writing is concerned. The first of these three songs, *The Lament of Ian the Proud*, is stark, unmitigated tragedy, austere in its simplicity and strength, broken only by a moment of passion, and another of lyricism at the words, “O blown, whirling leaf, and the old grief.” This mood soon passes, but gives opportunity for a bit of imaginative painting in the piano score as attractive as it is fleeting. These deft touches, through which the piano seems to interpret the innermost meaning of the poem and never contents itself with merely decorative effects, abound in Griffes' later songs and form one of the chief elements of their charm.

The two following songs, *Thy Dark Eyes to Mine* and *The Rose of the Night*, are the two particular jewels in this crown of Griffes' achievement in songwriting and really belong together. They might well be said to constitute the very thesis and antithesis of passion. The one lyric, buoyant in spite of its intensity, the other dark, portentous, unearthly, a passionate burst of flame in the night.

And this difference in emotional content is admirably maintained throughout. We find it exemplified in the very first pages of the two songs. While the objective technique is identical in both—a constantly iterated and re-iterated pattern in the piano score supporting the opening phrases of the voice—the result is totally dif-

ferent. The first, indeed, speaks no wan, anemic passion—it breathes intensity with every breath; and yet how it pales in contrast with the dark and flaming emotionalism of the other! It is in these subtle gradations of color, the use of these graduated tints rather than the bald contrast between mere black and white, that Griffes shows his discriminating sense of color values.

And yet in spite of the superlative excellence of these songs there is in this first one a middle passage of a few measures showing an unexpected ineptitude, a disappointing awkwardness of expression, exceedingly rare with Griffes. It is the only flaw, however, in the entire song, which culminates in a soul-sweeping climax of great sonority both in voice and piano, closing with another of those fascinating linear designs in the piano score that Griffes knew so well how to fashion.

In *The Rose of the Night* we are conscious at once of an atmosphere charged with an intensity of passion quite foreign to the other song. This intensity develops constantly throughout the song, until at the words, "Kiss me, imperishable Fire," it reaches a climax such as we shall find nowhere else in all of Griffes' songs—we might almost say in all song literature. For where is anything to compare with the scorching eloquence of this anguished ecstasy?

There are also in this song various details which show the admirable craftsmanship of the composer—such as the introduction at various times (and with especial poignancy in the elaborate postlude) of the descending progression C sharp, B sharp, A, over a dramatically colored harmony, thus giving emotional unity to the song; and at the words, "Deep silence of the night," the simple but striking effect of the voice singing a passing D natural against the C sharp minor chord in the piano—another fine instance of sensitiveness to color.

Written at this same general period are the *Five Poems* of Ancient China and Japan: *So-fei gathering Flowers, Landscape, The Old Temple Among the Mountains, Tears*, and *A Feast of the Lanterns* (1917), all of them interesting in their use of oriental scales and intervals.

Two Poems by John Masefield for Medium Voice with Piano Accompaniment—*An Old Song Re-sung* and *Sorrow of Mydath* (1920) — were published posthumously. In the first of these (constructively simple throughout) the piano score is almost exclusively chordal, which is unusual in these songs. The song rises to a climax of sardonic humor with a telling pictorial touch at the line, "The broken glass was chinking."

Sorrow of Mydath, despite its undeniable power as a mood picture, seems more in the nature of a bold experiment in the use of various items of modernist technique: prolific use of patterns in the piano score, chord clusters (exceedingly effective at times in their uncouth progressions) and more than a hint at polytonality. Not a great song, perhaps, but one well illustrating Griffes' never ceasing ambition to enlarge his vocabulary, to increase the eloquence of his speech.

IV

With this brief review of his songs, then, we realize how vivid was Griffes' musical personality; that through all the phases of his development as a songwriter—whether as pure romanticist, impressionist, or post-impressionist—he was

no mere experimenter in new modes of speech, nor yet a clever dabbler in new æsthetic philosophies, but always and at all times absolutely and genuinely himself. And therein lies his power. Therefore it is that the early and simple *Auf geheimem Waldespfade* can take its place beside the ultra-modern *Rose of the Night* nor feel sensitive or ashamed. Than which, of course, there could be no finer tribute to the artistic integrity, the genuine sincerity of our composer.

More and more, therefore, we must regret his untimely death. With his intellectual force, his keen awareness of all new currents of thought and quick response to such stimuli, his extraordinarily developed technique (both subjective and objective), he would certainly have gone far as a composer. That this later, maturer development was denied him, is a very real loss not only to our own American music but to world music as well.

We may be more than thankful, however, for the many worthwhile works he has left us, young as he was. And it is a hopeful sign that along with his orchestral, chamber, and piano music, his songs are beginning to appear on concert programs. At least *Auf geheimem Waldespfade** (more often as *By a Lonely Forest Pathway*), *Symphony in Yellow*, *In a Myrtle Shade*, and *The Rose of the Night* have so appeared and it is to be hoped that more may eventually find place there. They should make definite appeal to singers and auditors alike, for, unlike many contemporary songs, in spite of their modernity they are still songs with a definite and attractive melodic line—songs which still may be sung and need not be declaimed. No one who has heard Roland Hayes sing *In a Myrtle Shade* or *The Rose of the Night* need be told what artistic possibilities for the singer are inherent in these songs.

May the fine endeavor, so early and so tragically relinquished by Griffes himself, be carried on in spirit by those who gratefully and sympathetically perform his works; and may those who, following in his footsteps, strive to evoke a worthy type of music in America, bring to bear upon their own work what was so potent a guiding force in his—a cultured and enlightened artistic sincerity.

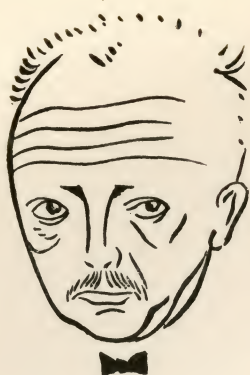
* BY A LONELY FOREST PATHWAY. (Griffes) One side and A SPRING FANCY. (Densmore) One side. Elisabeth Rethberg (Soprano) with piano accompaniment. One 10-inch disc (B-15146). \$1.50.

BY A LONELY FOREST PATHWAY. (Griffes) One side and MORRO ROCK. (Seaver) One side. Alexander Kisselburgh (Baritone) with piano accompaniment. One 10-inch disc (C-2041D). 75c.



Richard Strauss

By LAURENCE POWELL



The normal life-plan of a composer is a procession from small beginnings to great achievement: the tragedy of Richard Strauss' life has been the tragedy of nearly all prodigies, a reversal of this procedure. The brilliance of his entry was a pretty sure indication that the later stages of his career would be short-winded. He was extremely unfortunate in that he wrote his best works first, but this does not mean that the early works are stupendous masterpieces any more than it means that the later works are piffle. The causes of Strauss' apparent decadence are not far to seek. It is not at all difficult to fathom why he wrote his best works first: the reasons are obvious. To begin with his birth was all wrong, both as to date and country. The logical time for his birth was round 1835, which would have made him Brahms' junior by two years: they would have been colleagues in the culmination of traditional German technique and foils one to the other, Brahms the apostle of the spiritual, inspired by interior things expressed in absolute music, and Strauss the apostle of the material, inspired by external things expressed in program music. Strauss would, like Brahms, have finished his work by 1900 and would have passed away before the inevitable consummation of the traditional German technique, which was due by the turn of the century no matter what happened and no matter what personality or genius might come along.

As it was, Strauss, being born in 1864, learned to sing most admirably in the German traditional way, and having reached maturity before the time of the dissolution in 1900, had to witness the arrival of a new language, to the use of which he was totally unable to adapt himself: he was too inured in the old to join in the new chorus of young composers who sang a strain strange and foreign. Had the gods been less malignant Strauss might have been saved by being born in France with Debussy, or in Russia with Skryabin and thus grown up with the beginnings of the newer idioms. But as it was Strauss had to make his symphonic poems out of materials that had done service for the whole host of German Masters from Bach to Wagner. And Wagner had just put such a strain on this Teutonic technique that the materials were practically at bursting point: *Tristan* was nearly as much as they could stand. All the more honor, then, to young Strauss for managing to put a further strain on these materials: all the more appropriate that he was hailed as Richard II, and no wonder that *Don Juan*, *Till Eulenspiegel*, *Don Quixote* and *Ein Heldenleben* were thought worthy of addition to German heritage.

But are these early works all they were thought to be by audiences of the nineties? On all sides nowadays one hears the younger generation strong and loud in their indictments, not only of the more recent Strauss but even of those hallowed "masterpieces" of the nineties. We of 1932 are no longer swept off our feet by amazing feats of orchestration: we no longer thrill to the brilliant sensationalism that the ninetyites found in those symphonic poems: we are incapable of appreciat-

ing the musical philosophy of *Zarathustra*, neither are we awed by the pitiful smallness of *Ein Heldenleben*. Instead of all this our ears are filled with the triteness of many an outworn cliché, the banality of dominant-tonic harmony and the emptiness of major diatonic tunes: and we hear it all the clearer because of the very thing that so staggered our fathers—a huge orchestra blaring forth things which were uttered perfectly by Mozart, who only needed a few strings to make them sing forever. It is very true that Strauss side-swiped into all sorts of sudden modulations that made the general texture of the music more taut: and that he enlivened the old technique with a certain impressionism and a much more certain realism. But in the light of more recent un-German tendencies and achievements, it is precisely this German impressionism that seems so inadequate beside that of Debussy or Stravinsky. Strauss' first hearers did not recognize the old diatonic technique when bedecked in such astonishing furbelows, but we can recognize the old lady all too clearly because her clothes have worn pretty thin in thirty years. And so, as previously said, had Strauss been born later and anywhere but in Germany he would have used the more modern impressionistic machine and been the equal of any contemporary: had he been born earlier he would have been in time to ride to the crest of the wave of German Romanticism, and would have helped Wagner build the last edifice that could have been built with the old materials, and he would have done what Liszt and Berlioz did, but very much better. His diatonics would have been in season instead of out-of-date. He would have spoken a living language instead of a dead one.

II

The gods made another tragic mistake when they allied in Strauss a supreme musicality with a prodigiously small mind. An infinite musical faculty is sterile without a great mind to fertilize it: greatness in any art is first of all the outcome of a great mind, deep and visionary: success in the expression of the mind comes through technique. Strauss' music is singularly lacking in depth, there being nothing soul-searching about it: we are seldom ravished by it. His mind being innocent of inner depths for exploration, Strauss has been forced to depend upon externals for his inspiration, either in other people's emotions in which he takes no part or in purely material things. Since his emotional music is nearly always the photographed emotion of somebody else, it rarely rings true, but savors of the artificial or manufactured and is often sentimental. In his dramatic music he does not feel with his characters, but acts more like a newshawk, interested only in producing copy. As a contrast take Debussy whose *Mélisande* convinces you that Debussy wept with her. The crocodile tears of Strauss were not noticed in the nineties, when people revelled in artificial emotion and wallowed in melodrama and sentimentality. However, this melodramatic trait is over-apparent to us now, because we have gone to the other extreme and prefer mechanodrama. We now even abhor emotion of any kind, or pretend we do.

It is probably because of Strauss' shallowness and also because of his dependence upon externals that he is so preëminently successful when dealing with a humorous subject, or at least a whimsical one, or to quote Miss America, a "cute" one. *Till Eulenspiegel* was a cute little rascal, who brought forth from Strauss some of the best music he ever wrote and one of the finest symphonic poems in existence. The

Knight of the Rueful Countenance and his wise henchman Sancho amused Strauss and thus the world got another incomparable tone-poem. *Der Rosenkavalier* tickled the composer's fancy, and Strauss wove music that heightened immeasurably the effect of the humorous situations in this "Comedy for Music" which is outstanding among the Strauss operas. But when face to face with a solemn subject Strauss bores modern ears. The once much respected *Tod und Verklärung* stirs little response nowadays, most of it being Strauss at his worst. The depiction of the death scene and actual death make fair movie music, but the more "transfigured" the work becomes the more banal does it get. The actual transfiguration and the happenings in the other world are given us to the burden of the well-worn formula that appears in about fifty per cent of the works of Haydn and Mozart, the old horn passage that Beethoven uses (reversed) for his *Lebewohls* in his *Departure, Absence and Return* Sonata, Opus 81a. In fact it gets more and more obvious that with the exception of the humorous music, Strauss' early works have been greatly over-estimated, and this over-estimation of the early works has undoubtedly resulted in an under-valuation of the later ones. There has not been such a terrible decline in Strauss as many would have us believe.

It was after the operas *Salome* and *Elektra* that critics began to deplore a falling off in Strauss' invention and inspiration, but it must be remembered that it was just about this time that non-German technique was beginning to attract so much attention and in gaining the upper hand necessarily made the old well-worn German technique seem stale by comparison. However, there certainly was some sort of slackening of the earlier Strauss energy (perhaps he lost heart at seeing so much success come of the newer things he knew he could not do), but there is little doubt that *Salome* and *Elektra* had been over-praised. They are both pretty poor operas when you leave out of consideration such purely technical elements as harmony, counterpoint and orchestration. They lack the psychological element that made Mozart and Wagner such astute dramatists: Strauss cannot limn in a character without a let-down somewhere. But apart from character drawing the ethos of this operatic music is not uniform: in *Salome* the exotic stretches are always being interrupted by a grossly Teutonic idiom that is like a sausage dangling between audience and stage, between audience and Orient: passages that are admirable in every way fizzle out in a banal dominant-tonic cadence. *Elektra* was Strauss' conscious effort to be in step with the younger idea, the recipe being either to slide the bass along one measure so as to conflict discordantly with the treble reaches of the score, or else to mix together in the clumsiest way possible old hackneyed chords.

III

In *Der Rosenkavalier*, however, Strauss had a comedy to tackle and at once felt at home, so that there was a rekindling of the mind that wrought *Till*. Then again by the very nature of the Hofmannsthal libretto he was enabled to indulge in stylized music with an Eighteenth Century flavor and there was no need to varnish his essentially Mozartian technique, for it is from Mozart that Strauss hails more than from Wagner: the dominant-tonic cadence is here admirably in place and fits in with the scheme as well as do whatever Straussian flourishes there are. Though the work is a patchwork quilt, it has a unity all its own and will long outlive the ponderous *Elektra* and the slightly Viennese *Salome*.

It is the more recent operas at which the critics turn up their noses. They may be weaker than the previous ones, but one cannot help thinking that if Strauss had never written the brilliant *Till* as early as he did, *Die ägyptische Helena* would not have been considered at all a bad work. It is quite certain that if Strauss had been an American and *Helena* his *King's Henchman*, it would have been lauded to the skies in the American press which cold shouldered it as a late opus of Strauss the German. Then, again, are these recent Strauss operas so very much worse than fifty per cent of the operas that keep the New York Metropolitan and Chicago Civic companies on the boards? Are they any worse than Meyerbeer's pageants or the Bellini-Donizetti macaroni music? The very same critics that jump on Strauss for his lighter music, as for instance the *Bourgeois Gentleman* Suite or the waltz scene from the opera *Intermezzo*, are the very first to proclaim the inane ditties of Broadway as the stuff fit for symphonic development by 100% American composers. Surely Strauss' lighter music is no worse than the anthems of Tin Pan Alley. Personally I prefer Strauss.

All that is needed for a just appraisal of Strauss is a little psychology. Are we going to be fashionable and damn his newer works altogether because they happen to be a little out-of-date and because we over-estimated his earlier ones, or are we at last going to realize that he is a consummate master in the realm of second-rate music, certainly not to be compared with Wagner or any of the Masters, but certainly the peer of a Dvorák or a Tschaikowsky, a super-celestial Victor Herbert, a Titan among the Strausses? The capers of *Till* will delight, the antics of *Don Quixote* will amuse and the scurrilous Baron Ochs will make dates with chambermaids long after *Pacific 231* has run off the rails and *Machinist Hopkins* met the doom ordained by Herr Spengler for all machinery.

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(Continued from page 102)

joined by her husband in a matchless rendering of the "Lost Sheep's Return." The first side is probably the finest example of what is called bad taste that we have on records, and for reasons that will quickly be appreciated on hearing the record. If things in bad taste offend you, perhaps you had better avoid the disc; otherwise it is likely to prove highly amusing. But everyone can enjoy the "Lost Sheep's Return" and the delightful dialogue on C-2561D.



Two of the leading companies have interesting announcements regarding the long-playing records this month. From RCA Victor comes the news that hereafter all domestic masterwork sets will be recorded and issued in both standard and long-playing form. There will be no dubbing, as the recording for both types of discs will be done at the same time. . . . Columbia announces a "practical longer-playing record," which will play on any standard phonograph at 78 r.p.m., so that no adjustments or attachment will be necessary. The Columbia longer-playing record, according to the announcement, will "provide twice the musical entertainment at a negligible price increase." Two double-sided 10-inch records of popular selections are announced for early release. They are priced at 85c each, just 10c more than the ordinary 10-inch dance record. . . . H. M. V., having already successfully launched a Hugo Wolf Society and started a Beethoven Piano Sonata Society, now plans a Haydn Society. The *Gramophone* hints that there is also a possibility of a Sibelius Society. . . . The three performances of Schönberg's *Gurre-Lieder* given recently by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Stokowski were recorded in their entirety by RCA Victor on fourteen 12-inch standard records and seven 12-inch long-playing discs. The standard records were made at the Friday and Monday performances; the long-playing records at the Saturday concert.



WILLIAM TREAT UPTON, who contributes an article on "The Songs of Charles Tomlinson Griffes" to this issue, is the author of "Art Song in America: A Study in the Development of American Music," published last year. Mr. Upton, now Professor of Pianoforte at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Oberlin, Ohio, is a frequent contributor to musical magazines.

Ernest Bloch

By DAVID EWEN



It was exactly a year ago that I received a letter which first warned me that Ernest Bloch was, at last, about to touch the heights in his music. The letter had come from Ticino, Switzerland—where Bloch had secluded himself from the world in order to compose his *Liturgy*—and it was from the hand of Bloch's daughter, Lucienne. Ernest Bloch—the letter told me in part—was working with a passionate fever on his latest composition because he felt that death was near at hand; he was composing with an almost mad zeal and industry—day and night—because he sincerely felt that *Liturgy* was his masterpiece, the work above all others that would immortalize his name

to posterity, and that, consequently, he must finish it himself even to the minutest details before it was too late.

I did not believe that Bloch was as near death as he himself felt. I knew that he was a man of savage seriousness which bordered almost upon morbidity; I knew also that his hypersensitiveness made him suffer physical and spiritual pains which were in themselves not fatal. That I was not wrong was proved several months later by the heartening news that he had recovered both physically and spiritually. But that Bloch should be obsessed with thoughts of death at a time when he was creating a religious work of monumental proportions seemed to me all-significant.

There are certain creators who, when in the shadow of death, suddenly get a new vision, a new insight often profound and other-worldly—as though they had succeeded in catching a glimpse of the eternal and the infinite. Mozart, in the presence of death, composed perhaps the most poignant and spiritual music of his entire career—the *Requiem*. Beethoven created an altogether new type of music in his last quartets. Ernest Bloch, I felt, would be similarly affected. His temperament and nature—poetical, impressionable, inclined towards morbidity—made such a reaction inevitable, I felt. To compose a religious work with the fear of death in his heart—cannot one foresee the type of music that a serious artist and a personality like Bloch would compose under the circumstances?

Since that letter from Lucienne, I have heard frequently about the progress of *Liturgy*. From what I have heard about this work, and from the portion of the manuscript which I had the occasion to see recently, I am convinced that my early suspicions were well justified. *Liturgy* promises not only to be the greatest work from Ernest Bloch's pen but it promises to stir the music world as no work since Strawinsky's *Sacre du Printemps*.

This composition is divided into five parts, and is built about a Hebrew text drawn exclusively from the Sabbath services. It is conceived and developed with the utmost economy of means, and with the utmost simplicity. Traditional Hebrew motives are used from time to time—but, more generally, the melodies are of Bloch's own construction, and convey the spirit of the poetry they hope to express

with a felicitousness that is nothing short of admirable. A small orchestra, a mixed chorus, an organ and a baritone soloist (the cantor) will be required to give the composition.

Several musicians whose opinion I value highly, and who have gone through the entire manuscript of the *Liturgy*, have pronounced it a masterpiece—filled with a tenderness, a poignancy, a sublimity rare in the music of our time. This is high praise, indeed; the fact that two of these musicians are not Jewish, and are therefore altogether unfamiliar with the Jewish ritual, makes this praise doubly significant. Something within me tells me forcefully that this praise is justified, that Bloch with *Liturgy* has reached the highest peak in his career. For Ernest Bloch has been a vital, significant force in modern music for many years now; it required, on his part, only a bold thrust forward for him to touch genuine greatness. That thrust, I believe, he has just made with his *Liturgy*.

II

In Ernest Bloch's music there is a marvelous unity. The same characteristics that make his later compositions outstanding are found, in embryo, latent in his earliest fumbblings. This, I feel, is an important and interesting point. One is justified in questioning the sincerity or the significance of a composer who changes his style overnight, and whose life work constitutes many opposed trends. True genius evolves as naturally and as inevitably as a creation of Nature, from embryo state to full maturity. The characteristics of Beethoven in his *Missa Solemnis* and the last quartets can be clearly discerned in the opening of the First Symphony, where the composer plays with his tonality, and in the pensive slow movement of the D Major Piano Sonata (Op. 10, No. 3). The former is merely an inevitable outgrowth of the latter. The Wagner of *Parsifal* can be recognized in *Rienzi*, although it is apparent that in the former work the composer had become richer and maturer. The same is true of every musical genius. Study his life-work and you will see that his style has grown gradually from his earliest works—where it is perceptible in an abortive stage—to those works that have immortalized him.

This, I believe, is characteristic of Ernest Bloch's music; this, too, has made him for me one of the most significant composers of our time. The C Sharp Minor Symphony, the *Hiver Printemps*, the *Poemes d'automne* already reveal Bloch's fingerprints. There are here those majestic sweeps of the pen, that vastness of scope and outlook, that impressive grandeur that so overwhelm us in his greater works. A close study of these works reveals a remarkable similarity between them and the later compositions in the free use of the rhythmic element and the fully developed melodic formations. In these early works, too, there is something fresh and invigorating and healthy, like a gust of Winter wind. In these works an individuality speaks with a sharp and decisive tongue, and he demands attention.

The C Sharp Minor Symphony, composed at the age of twenty-one, especially commands attention. A lad stands at the brink of life, wonders what it has in store for him, and gasps at its complexity. The gasp is the C Sharp Minor Symphony. The Symphony is permeated with the struggle of the youthful musician to learn the mysteries of life and to discover his place in it. The subtitles of the various movements give us a psychological insight into the young composer. The first movement

is called "The Tragedy of Life." The ensuing movements are entitled "Happiness and Faith," "The Irony and Sarcasm of Life," and "The Triumph of Will."

One can forgive the schoolboy rhetoric of these subtitles, as well as the pretentiousness of the Symphony as a whole. One can also forgive the frequent reminders of Wagner and Brahms and Richard Strauss in this music. For the Symphony, despite all of its apparent shortcomings, is a composition of great power and beauty. All the fragile delicacy in harmonic construction, all the compactness of form, all the brilliance of orchestral tone-colors, all that passionate sincerity and seriousness of the later Bloch can be found in this early Symphony. There is little stammering, little fumbling in this work. The composer seemed surprisingly sure of himself and his technique. As a result, when the Symphony was given one of its infrequent hearings, several seasons ago by Mr. Willem Mengelberg, it impressed deeply.

Ernest Bloch's music has always been a revealing document about himself. The C Sharp Minor Symphony may be said to be the first chapter in his musical autobiography. The second chapter he was to write with his Hebrew music.

III

The outgrowth from his first period to that of his Hebrew music was not quite so sudden as people are tempted to believe. As a matter of fact there are many Hebraic qualities in his early music. Notice the elegaic Semitic sadness of the slow movement of the C Sharp Minor Symphony; notice, too, the Chassidic mysticism of the fugue of its last movement. The *Poemes d'automne* is as passionately Hebrew in spirit as even the *Israel* Symphony. Ernest Bloch evidently felt the Hebrew spirit keenly from the very first and attempted to transfer it to his music.

It was not until a little more than ten years after the Symphony that Bloch openly acknowledged himself as a Jewish composer. "Racial consciousness is absolutely necessary in music, even though nationalism is not," he announced triumphantly. "I am a Jew. I aspire to write Jewish music not for the sake of self-advertisement but because it is the only way in which I can produce music of ability and significance—if I can do such a thing at all!" This, certainly, is the credo of a Jew-intoxicated man. Why Bloch should have become so race-conscious it is difficult to explain. He himself had never been a pious Jew, nor had he stemmed from an Orthodox Jewish home. Early influences, therefore, had not moulded him. The explanation may lie in the fact that Bloch, always passionately eager to express himself in his music, felt that being a Jew by birth and heritage he must express himself in music as a Jew. But I feel that this is only part of the explanation. The truth is that there was something deep within Bloch—a something which he himself did not understand for a long time—which cried for expression. Bloch must have felt his race keenly even from birth, more keenly than it is felt by most Jews. Inevitably it had to find an outlet. The fact that it took Bloch more than ten years to discover his true mission clearly proves, I think, that this was not an overnight development, but rather a slow evolution in his art.

This Hebrew period produced some of Bloch's best known works including his Psalms for voice and orchestra, his *Israel* Symphony, his *Schelomo* for 'cello and

orchestra, his *Three Jewish Poems*, and his *Hebrew Quartet*. It will be noticed that, in these works, Bloch interpreted the Jew from several aspects. In the *Three Jewish Poems* and *Psalms* he gives an interpretation of the poetry of the Jew; in *Schelomo* he expresses the Biblical Jew at his greatest—in the form of Israel's great king, Solomon; and in the *Israel Symphony* and the *Hebrew Quartet* Bloch speaks of the present-day Jew in exile, overwhelmed by suffering, lost hopes and spiritual pains.

I do not accept all of Bloch's Hebrew music so fondly as do many other musicians. Although I recognize that in this music Bloch more than once stabbed at greatness with musical utterances that are nothing short of inspired (the best pages in this music must inevitably rank with the great music of our age!), I also find faults which, I think, will ultimately condemn much of this music. Both the *Israel Symphony* and *Schelomo*, for example—discounting once again their more magnificent pages—are too self-conscious. Certain elements of Hebrew music—the Oriental colorings, the ritual trumpets, the minor-second intervals, etc.—have, I feel, been superimposed upon the music, and are not integral and inevitable parts of it. Both the *Israel Symphony* and *Schelomo*, in short, fail to convince as Hebrew documents. The best passages are those in which the Hebrew message is less asserted; at such times the music acquires depth and eloquence. It is almost as though, freed of the constraining necessity of composing a music essentially Hebrew, Bloch could give his inspiration free reign, and it could soar and expand.

In the *Three Jewish Poems* and the *Hebrew Quartet* the attempt to fill the music with the technicalities of Hebrew music is less frequent and less obvious, with the result that this music has a greater unity and strength than either *Schelomo* or the *Israel Symphony*. In both the *Three Jewish Poems* and the *Hebrew Quartet*, Bloch attempts to speak the poetry of the Bible in tones, to give it interpretation. The result is that, often, this music is drenched with a poetry that has all the ecstasy and pain of Solomon's Song of Songs. This music has caught the spirit of the Old Testament, and in Bloch's cool counterpoint and tender harmonies the prophets seem to speak their sublime poetry.

IV

More recently, Ernest Bloch has digressed momentarily from his path, and has turned to composing music other than Hebrew. His Pianoforte Quintet, his Symphony *America* and his *Helvetia* may not be Hebrew compositions, but they are works obviously written by a race-conscious Jew. It has been pointed out that the Indians in the *America* Symphony dance with Chassidic feet, and it is a very discerning comment. Bloch may have temporarily discarded Hebrew music—but Hebrew music has remained faithful to him.

And yet, I look upon the Quintet as the most Hebrew of Ernest Bloch's works, the most successful attempt of his to give expression to his race. To me, it is a profoundly religious document. But its religion does not consist of glittering exteriors. It consists, rather, of the religion of philosophers. Through its harmonies, Spinoza trumpets his intellectual love of God. The meditative mysticism in the heart of every pious Jew speaks in the cool counterpoint. The religion of the Quintet purifies and exalts. It shows us more clearly than ever, it gives us, sud-

denly and mysteriously, a glimpse of the true soul of the Hebrew religion.

The Quintet is something infinitely more than merely great Hebrew music, however. It is also one of the most beautiful musical creations of our time. The music of the Quintet seems to have flowed directly from Ernest Bloch's heart. Not a note in it seems to have required perspiration or labor. Like all great art, the Quintet appears to be a spontaneous flow of beauty. The music is not—like that of many moderns—a nauseating rationalization of the composer's theories. The dissonances fit aptly and gracefully. Even so futuristic a device as playing upon the bridge of the first violin—as the piano thunders out the main theme—seems to be an inevitable portion of an inevitable. The Quintet does not dabble with experimental tones or chords. It is a complete and chiselled whole. It is a direct message which speaks forcefully, passionately, often eloquently.

In both *America* and *Helvetia* the Jew Bloch pays tribute to his country. If both of these works are disappointing, it is only because Bloch does not seem to feel his country's spirit as intimately as that of his race. There are great moments in *America*. There are passages of heroic grandeur, of colossal power and energy. The opening to the Symphony and certain pages of the second movement are among Bloch's supreme achievements. And yet *America*, as well as *Helvetia*, lack conviction. In *America* the anthem which Bloch fashioned for the close is not a culminating pæan of praise that one had the right to expect; it is a naïve and ingenuous melody that might have been penned by a schoolboy. And the potpourri of Indian melodies, Yiddish tunes, Civil war songs, "blues-songs," etc., is only a meaningless hodge-podge. Bloch was meant for nobler music than this.

Last year, however, Bloch returned to his race. Enabled by a handsome endowment to escape to a secluded corner of Switzerland, there to compose in peace and solitude, he decided that he would not only compose Hebrew music again, but religious music. He would attempt to give a musical garb of symphonic proportions to the synagogue prayers. And why not? Some of the greatest masterpieces in music are church works built about prayers — Bach's Mass and Passions, Cherubini's Requiem, Handel's Messiah. Is it not possible that a Jewish musical genius might create a great work on Hebrew prayers? This question Ernest Bloch has attempted to answer with his *Liturgy*. We suspect that he has answered it emphatically.

BLOCH RECORDINGS

CONCERTO GROSSO. Five sides and ARIOSO. (Bach) Philadelphia Chamber String Simfonieta conducted by Fabien Sevitzky. Three 12-inch discs (V-9596 to V-9598) in album. Victor Set M-66. \$5.

NIGUN—*Improvisation*. Two sides. Joseph Szigeti (Violin) with piano accompaniment. One 10-inch disc (C-2047M). \$1.

NIGUN—*Improvisation*. Two sides. Yehudi Menuhin (Violin) with piano accompaniment by Louis Persinger. One 12-inch disc (V-7108). \$2.



Recorded Programs

[Such a vast quantity of good music is now available for the phonograph that quite frequently records of more than ordinary merit are overlooked. It will be the purpose of this page to call attention to such records. Readers are invited to send in their suggestions. Records which appeared prior to the appearance of Disques and hence have never been reviewed in these pages will be given preference. All types and makes will be considered, and an effort will be made to avoid the hackneyed and excessively familiar.]

HANDEL

"Alcina" Suite

New York Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra conducted by Willem Mengelberg.

[Two 10-inch discs (V-1435 and V-1436). \$1.50 each.]

The Suite consists of the following numbers: Overture, Musette, Menuet, Gavotte, Sarabande, Menuet and Tamburino. When the opera *Alcina* was first produced at Covent Garden, London, on April 16, 1735 (Handel had just completed the work only eight days previously), it was received with vast enthusiasm. But the charming Ballet Music, to which these records are largely devoted, did not fare so well. The music of the Suite is rugged and buoyant and makes delightful recording material. The records are among the most desirable Mengelberg made with the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra. Judged strictly, the recording is not flawless, but it is satisfactory, and in any case the discs should be in all record libraries. When, incidentally, are we to have a recording of the *Water Music* Suite?

BEETHOVEN

Violin Concerto in D Major

Fritz Kreisler and Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.

[Six 12-inch discs (V-8074 to V-8079) in album. Victor Set M-13. \$15.]

This is one of the earliest of the Victor electrical sets, and therefore is not entirely free from certain of the faults common to most discs made when the new recording methods came into effect. Compared to the best modern recordings, the discs in many places are rather coarse, and the balance between orchestra and soloist is not always plausible. Not infrequently the violin almost succeeds in drowning out the accompaniment, and the latter never comes out quite so strongly as one feels it should. But even so the set is surely one of the most remarkable of the early electrical recordings, and in places—notably in the second movement—it could readily pass as a fairly recent piece of work. One of the finest and most popular of all violin concertos, the work has not suffered neglect, and so is a familiar item to concert-goers. Kreisler plays it beautifully, and the accompaniment by Dr. Blech is exemplary—when the recording does his orchestra justice. The Concerto ought to be recorded again (Szigeti or Alfred Busch ought to have a chance at it), but until another version appears this one will do very nicely. It takes more than indifferent recording to spoil a performance and music so fine as can be had from these records. . . . On the odd side Kreisler plays the Adagio from Bach's Partita in G Minor.

STRAUSS

Trio and Duet from "Der Rosenkavalier"

Elisabeth Ohms (Soprano), Adele Kern (Soprano) and Elfriede Marherr (Soprano) with orchestra conducted by Julius Prüwer.

[One 12-inch disc (B-90051). \$1.50.]

This is one of the most charming of all the recordings from *Der Rosenkavalier*. The first side gives the Trio sung by Sophie, Octavian and the Princess, and the closing Duet sung by Sophie and Octavian is on the reverse. The singers are first-rate, and so is the orchestral accompaniment conducted by Julius Prüwer. It is too bad, though, that there wasn't room for the final orchestral measures on the last side.



ORCHESTRA

SKRYABIN

V-7515

to

V-7518

{ POEM OF ECSTASY and PROMETHEUS. Eight sides.
Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Leopold Stokowski, with
Sylvan Levin (Piano) and Chorus from Curtis Institute of
Music. Four 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-125. \$8.

After the long dull Winter through which we have just passed, during which our mail has been flooded with gloomy letters proving that the phonograph industry is now in its last painful throes, one stares at these records with incredulous eyes. But one's astonishment rapidly changes to exhilaration when he learns that these are but the first releases of a new series of recordings which the RCA Victor Company, using a new recording process, is now doing. We have heard so much about the companies' lack of interest, enterprise and originality that it is to be hoped that collectors will study the labels of these records long and earnestly. Skryabin, as everybody knows, has heretofore been sedulously avoided by the phonograph companies. With the exception of a couple of little piano pieces, nothing of his has been recorded, and it was beginning to seem as if we would have to wait a long while before we could expect any of the major orchestral works on discs.

Here are two of his most important works recorded under the best possible auspices. The records arrived just as we were going to press, and so we do not propose to venture more than a few general remarks regarding them here. Skryabin's music and esoteric æsthetic system cannot be wrestled with in a few hasty words, and in any case Mr. Laurence Powell will have an article in the next issue dealing with the Russian composer and these new records. Neither the *Poem of Ecstasy* nor *Prometheus* is to be lightheartedly recommended nor summarily dismissed after one hearing. The average collector, used to the general run of releases, will not find it altogether easy to adjust himself to Skryabin's music, which is entirely different from anything else we know of on records. Nor will the complicated program notes with which those of us who have heard Skryabin performed in the concert hall are vaguely familiar be of any substantial help. The best thing is to grapple with the music itself, and perhaps heed Mr. Lawrence Gilman's judicious advice in his program notes on *Prometheus*. "The later orchestral works of Skryabin," he says, "cannot be fully apprehended unless it is borne in mind that for Skryabin they represented something more than adventures in æsthetic expression. These last symphonic scores of his—the *Divine Poem*, the *Poem of Ecstasy*, and especially *Prometheus: the Poem of Fire*—do not primarily aim (in Wagner's phrase) at the 'susciing of pleasure in beautiful forms.' Nor are they expressive in the more familiar sense of the term: music designed to convey those moods and emotions that are common to all men—joy, desire, passion, grief; the contemplation of Nature, the delight of the senses in the beauty of the world. Skryabin intended these orchestral tone-poems as mystical rites, and we cannot meet him even halfway unless we try to understand his point of view, with as generous an attempt to grant his premises as we can achieve. . . . The essential fact to bear in mind is that Skryabin was a whole-hearted and uncompromising mystic,

and that he regarded music as a vehicle for the conveyance of religious experience (we are speaking of the mature Skryabin, not of the earlier composer of Chopinesque salon-music)."



As was mentioned above, there was not sufficient time for more than a hurried hearing of these discs, but the impression gained was a favorable one. The recording is not what is called sensational, nor is there any overwhelming amount of volume; but it is richly satisfying and tonally very good. The surfaces, moreover, are smooth and quiet. It will be noted that, though the composer gave authority for the omission of the choral part in *Prometheus*, the RCA Victor Company has nevertheless gone to the trouble of supplying a chorus from the Curtis Institute of Music to sing this part. It is to be hoped that the records will have a wide circulation, for if the phonograph is ever to get beyond its present uncertain position, it will obviously have to yield music other than that with which we are all only too well acquainted. Here, then, is an opportunity for collectors to prove that they are willing to explore some of the more difficult pathways and that the companies are justified in recording more music like these Skryabin works.

J. STRAUSS
B-90222
to
B-90226

STRAUSS WALTZES: *On the Beautiful Blue Danube*; *Tales from the Vienna Woods*; *Voices of Spring*; *Roses from the South*; *Emperor*. Ten sides. Opera Orchestra, Berlin-Charlottenburg, and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Julius Prüwer.

Five 12-inch discs in album. Brunswick Set No. 36. \$7.50.

The old theory that the Strauss waltzes—unless, as occasionally happened, they were played by some famous organization—were not worthy of the fancy labels the companies ordinarily reserve for their records of the “best” music seems at long last to have been demolished. It probably derived from the more general belief that confused Strauss with all composers of light music, whether trashy or not. There will always be people who earnestly lift their noses at anything save the grave and solemn, conveniently overlooking the fact that platitude lurks behind an important frown just as frequently as superficiality does behind a smile. But the flimsy foundation on which this belief has hitherto comfortably rested appears now to have collapsed completely, and as a result one may profess a fondness for the Viennese waltz as practised by its supreme master without first apologizing. This has had several pleasant consequences, and not the least of them is that the best of the foreign recordings of the Strauss waltzes are gradually finding their way into the domestic lists (often accompanied by the sacrosanct red or gold labels). Last Summer Victor put out an album of four or five Strauss waltzes played by the Berlin State Opera and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras conducted by Blech, Krauss and Kleiber. Brunswick, observing the rich store of Strauss recordings in the Polydor catalogue, now follows Victor’s example, and this attractive album of Polydor repressings is the result.

The collection is bound to enchant all connoisseurs of 3/4 time. The first glance at the contents of the album may produce some disappointment. Some will be grieved to note such thoroughly familiar items as the *Blue Danube*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *Voices of Spring* and *Roses from the South* included here. All



of these waltzes, they will recall, can be found in several versions in the domestic catalogues. But only one of them—*Voices of Spring* in Weingartner's superb recording, which Columbia issued last Fall—is thoroughly satisfactory. The others are either badly played, cut so as to fit one record-side, or otherwise unsatisfactory. And as for the *Emperor*, it has been almost entirely neglected, for there isn't a single symphonic recording of it in any of the domestic catalogues.

If the titles of these waltzes prove disappointing, though, once the records start spinning on the turn-table no one will feel disposed to cavil at the duplications. For here is some of the most voluptuous and exhilarating waltz-playing imaginable. All of the pieces are conducted by Julius Prüwer, and with the exception of the *Emperor* and *Voices of Spring*, which are rendered by the Berlin Philharmonic, all are played by the Opera Orchestra, Berlin-Charlottenburg. Prüwer usually achieves singularly impressive results in recording work, and is one of the finest of the conductors who work for Polydor. A Viennese by birth, he has the lilt and swing of these glorious waltzes in his blood, and he knows how to communicate his passion for them to his orchestra. There is here none of the heavy, excessively brilliant, and monotonously straightforward playing that marks the Stokowski and Stock Strauss recordings. Prüwer approaches the waltzes with delicacy and thorough understanding of what is in them; his subtle shading and varied tempi bring out all sorts of unsuspected felicities. What other music combines gayety and sadness more charmingly and artlessly than a Strauss waltz properly played? One could scarcely imagine more beautiful interpretations of *Roses from the South*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*—here given with the charming zither solo,—the *Emperor*, and the *Blue Danube*.

The set has one weakness, and that is uneven recording. There are spots throughout the album where it leaves much to be desired and is not nearly so smooth and clean as it should and could be. And tonally the records are somewhat coarse. But all this can be ameliorated if not altogether rectified by experimenting with the volume control and the judicious selection of needles.

PIERNÉ

C-G68035D
and
C-G68036D

CYDALISE ET LE CHÈVRE-PIED: *Ballet Suite*. Four sides.
Colonne Orchestra conducted by Gabriel Pierné.
Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

This ballet suite, based on a subject by Gaston de Caillavet and Robert de Flers, was produced at the Paris Opéra in 1923. The ballet revolves around a faun, Styrax, and the dancer, Cydalise. The music as given here is in the following movements: *Marche des Petits Faunes* (this has been recorded in several versions), *Le Leçon de Flûte de Pan*, *Marche des Élèves Nymphes*, *La Leçon de Danse sur le Mode Hypolydien*, and *Final*. Gabriel Pierné is better known to record collectors as a conductor than as a composer, though several of his works have been recorded. This ballet reveals him as a composer of pleasant gifts. The music, with touches here and there of Delibes and Massenet, is attractive and entertaining. The orchestration is effective, and there are several good tunes. The set is hardly calculated to arouse much excitement, but it will provide an enjoyable twenty minutes. Done by the Colonne Orchestra under the composer's bâton, the discs are deftly played and nicely recorded.

WAGNER
C-LX156
IMPORTED

GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG: *Death Music*. Two sides. British
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.



Miniature Score: Philharmonia No. 125.

There are probably not many record collectors who do not own a copy of Albert Coates' early electrical recording of this music. Issued almost six years ago, the record was an astonishing piece of work and at the time it seemed as if recording had reached the highest possible degree of excellence. And even today the record—surely one of the most famous ever made—is still considered one of the finest achievements of the recorders, though compared with the best modern recordings it does sound a little coarse. But no other recording of the *Funeral Music* even approached it. Now, however, it will have to be relegated to second place. Walter's new recording, most people will agree, is the superior. Walter's interpretation is no better than Coates', and indeed, if all other things were equal, it would probably not sound so impressive. But it is nevertheless a fine reading of the music, done slowly and majestically and with plenty of the elemental grandeur that makes the music so overwhelming in its effect. And when one comes to the recording, there can be no doubt but that this record is far better than the Coates. The preliminary kettle-drum beats, the sharp, cutting outbursts of the brass, the great upheaval that occurs on the second side—all is recorded with perfect balance, clarity and realism. Details missing or obscured by the none too refined recording in the Coates disc come out beautifully. It is an extraordinarily impressive achievement.

**JOSEPH
STRAUSS
LANNER**
C-G50323D

DELIRIEN *Waltz*. (Josef Strauss) One side and
SCHÖNBRUNN *Waltz*. (Lanner) One side. Dajos Bela Or-
chestra. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

SUPPÉ
V-22890

BOCCACCIO: *Selections*. Two sides. Marek Weber and His
Orchestra. One 10-inch disc. 75c.

The *Delirien* Waltz, by Josef Strauss, was issued by Brunswick a little while ago, and the disc was reviewed in the *March Disques*. More interesting is the Lanner piece. Joseph Franz Karl Lanner (1801-1843) is considered by some to be one of the founders of Viennese dance music. He was a contemporary of Johann Strauss, and the two were friends and rivals. Between them they kept Vienna enthusiastically waltzing to their exhilarating pieces. The *Schönbrunn* Waltz, one of his last pieces, is a delightful number, and Dajos Bela plays it with fine dash and gusto. . . . The *Boccaccio* selections are very tuneful, and the record will be of interest because of the recent Metropolitan production. It is deftly played and well recorded. It would be pleasant if Victor would give us more of such music; there is plenty available, as a glance through the foreign supplements will demonstrate. And since it is inevitable that light music of some sort or another must constitute a large part of the companies' lists, no one would cavil if a modest portion of them were composed of pieces like those on this little record.



R. STRAUSS

V-AN722

and

V-AN723

IMPORTED

"DER ROSENKAVALIER" SUITE: (a) *Überreichung der Silber Rose*. (b) *Ochs Waltzer*. (c) *Frühstückszene und Trio*. (d) *Schluss-Duett*. (R. Strauss-Arr. Nambuut) Four sides. Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Carl Alwin. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

Why is it that we never hear any of this lovely music—the waltz excepted, of course—in the concert hall? One's chances to hear *Der Rosenkavalier* in the opera house are at best somewhat limited, so that an orchestral suite taken from the opera ought to be gratefully received by symphony orchestra patrons. Moreover, it is high time that one of the recording companies got busy and put the whole work on discs. It might, at first blush, sound like a rather ambitious enterprise. But surely if Ponchielli's *Gioconda* is worthy of nineteen discs, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* thirteen, Massenet's *Werther* fifteen and Giordano's *Andrea Chenier* thirteen—surely if these operas can be issued in fairly complete form, there is no reason why *Der Rosenkavalier* shouldn't be similarly honored.

The music on these records presents no new material; nothing that has not been previously recorded is included here. During the early days of the electrical process, Richard Strauss himself, while in London, conducted various orchestral excerpts from the opera for H.M.V., and the set of four records was subsequently repressed by Victor. The selections included were: the Introduction to Act I, the Presentation of the Silver Rose, the Waltz Movements, the Octavian and Sophie Duet, the Presentation March, and the Trio and Finale of Act 3. These records even today sound pretty well on an electrical machine, but there will be many who will be grateful for the superior recording in the new discs by the Vienna Philharmonic. The Vienna Philharmonic, too, is a much better orchestra than that which played in the Strauss set—according to the record labels, the Augmented Tivoli Orchestra, apparently a movie house organization. The Viennese band is the logical one to interpret this lovely, almost too ripe music, and under Carl Alwin's direction it plays gloriously. In the waltz an engaging violin solo is skilfully played by Arnold Rosé. The recording maintains the high level of excellence that is expected of modern records.

**SMETANA
SCHUBERT**

V-D1986

and

V-D1987

IMPORTED

MOLDAU. (Smetana) Three sides and
HUNGARIAN MARCH. (Schubert-Liszt) One side. Berlin
State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech.
Two 12-inch discs. \$2 each.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 472.

SMETANA
V-1555

THE BARTERED BRIDE: *Overture*. Two sides. Chicago
Symphony Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock.
One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 664.

A passionate patriot and nationalist and a man of refreshing simplicity, Smetana sought in his cycle of six symphonic poems, *Ma Vlast*, to glorify his country. The

cycle, written between the years 1874 and 1879, is dedicated to the city of Prague. It is a noble and eloquent, if rather long-winded, tribute, and its profound and often touching simplicity is evident on every page of the score. The complete work—finely recorded on ten 12-inch records by the Bohemian Philharmonic Orchestra—is rather long, and it lacks sufficient variety to sustain interest throughout the entire six sections. But taken singly, the various symphonic poems, pervaded by a certain nostalgic sweetness that is homely but not unpleasing, are highly attractive. The second section of the work is the *Moldau*, and it is the only section of the six that is at all familiar in this country. The other sections are unaccountably neglected. But the *Moldau* is frequently played in the concert hall, and there are plenty of recordings of it. The music, of course, deals with the River Moldau. This is easily the finest recording of the music. Blech's well ordered reading is beautifully reproduced; many details, obscured by muddy recording in the other versions, come out with fine effect here. . . . The *Hungarian March*, by Schubert and arranged by Liszt, makes a pleasant filler for the odd side.



As for the Overture to the *Bartered Bride*, it, too, has needed a good recording. It surely hasn't been neglected, either on records or in the concert hall. Stock's recording, despite its many merits, isn't altogether felicitous. It would have been benefitted, one feels, if a 12-inch record had been used instead of a 10-inch. The piece is taken very rapidly in order to squeeze it all in the rather limited space, and in consequence much of the effectiveness of the Overture is lost. It is well played and the recording is excellent, but it isn't an ideal version. There is an admirable Polydor record of the piece which is satisfactory in all respects. It is played by the Berlin Philharmonic under Kopsch, and the number is PD-27034.

CONCERTO



BRUCH
V-7509
to
V-7511

CONCERTO NO. 1 in *G Minor*, Op. 26. Six sides. Yehudi Menuhin (Violin) and London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Landon Ronald.
Three 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set M-124. \$6.50.

Miniature Score: Eulenburg No. 714.

This well known Violin Concerto, now electrically recorded for the first time, makes a welcome addition to the library of recorded music. Moreover, it is the first work of Bruch's to be recorded by the new process. Max Bruch was born in Cologne in 1838 and died at Friedenau in 1920. Not much is heard of him today. Now and then the Violin Concerto is announced for performance, but the news hardly arouses much excitement. It is politely listened to, and then forgotten until some other virtuoso comes to town. Musicians used to hold that Bruch's choral works represented him at his best, but today that opinion seems to have been reversed, and when one thinks of Bruch at all it is commonly in connection with this Violin Concerto. "It is in fact the virtuoso," says Grove's, "whether of the voice or of the violin, who keeps Bruch's music alive, while



to Bruch himself and his immediate circle the essence of his art seemed to lie in his skilful *ensemble*. . . . His music gives little to discuss and nothing to quarrel about. It is its lack of adventure which has limited its fame. The virtuoso performer brings the sense of adventure into the concert room and supplies in his own interpretations what is absent from the music itself. Consequently, while Bruch's cantatas and symphonies are left on the shelf, the violin concertos everywhere continue to hold their own."

The three movements of the Concerto, whatever other shortcomings they may possess, surely do not lack life and gusto. There is nothing here properly describable as profundity, and much of the work may seem overblown and pompous. The Adagio, for example, which strives vainly for eloquence, frequently descends to nothing more than a sort of puerile sentimentalism. The first movement, Allegro moderato, is vigorous but overloud, and much the same can be said of the Finale. Bruch himself was in considerable doubt as to whether or not his work was really a concerto. Indeed, for a while he considered calling it a "fantasy," but Joachim assured him that the title "concerto" was justified, and so he let it stand.

In such a work much obviously depends upon the performance, and especially upon the soloist, who has it in his power to transform the insipid material with which he is furnished into something highly interesting and exciting. For all its noise and bombast it is nice to have the work recorded, especially in so expert a version as this one. Musical literature isn't so crowded with masterpieces that we can afford to be over-exacting. A blazing performance such as Yehudi Menuhin gives us here is sure to please. This constantly amazing young violinist sails into the work with obvious enthusiasm, and his fiery playing somehow makes it all sound very important and convincing. His tone is full and round and glowing, and the recording does it ample justice. The orchestral part is skilfully played by the London Symphony under Sir Landon Ronald, and particularly impressive is the heavy, full-blooded recording. Not since the Huberman-Friedman recording of the *Kreutzer* Sonata have we had so spirited and dashing a performance on records.

DEBUSSY
V-DB4809
IMPORTED

RHAPSODY for Clarinet and Orchestra. Two sides. M. Hamelin (Clarinet) and orchestra conducted by Piero Coppola. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Thus far perhaps the most important works for the clarinet we have had on records are the Brahms and Mozart Clarinet Quintets. There are, of course, numerous small pieces for the instrument available on records, but they do not amount to much—not, at any rate, to any save those especially interested in the clarinet. Debussy's Rhapsody for Clarinet and Orchestra, which dates from 1910, is one of two pieces he wrote for the instrument. The other, *Petite pièce* in B flat, was written the same year, but has not as yet been recorded. In the Rhapsody he treats the instrument with skill and taste, and some pleasing effects are obtained. The orchestral background is subdued but highly flexible and expressive. The record is recommended to those who like the clarinet. The rendition is excellent, and so is the recording.

PIANO



CHOPIN

C-68028D
to
C-68032D

WALTZES. Ten sides. Robert Lortat (Piano).
Five 12-inch discs in album. Columbia Set No. 171. \$7.50.

We have already had albums of the Chopin Nocturnes, two of the Piano Sonatas, the two Piano Concertos, the Preludes, the Études, the Mazurkas, and the Ballades. Now the waltzes, for the first time, are similarly honored, and the album should enjoy considerable popularity. Robert Lortat will be recalled as the pianist in the recent Columbia album of the Études. He was also the pianist in the earlier album, issued by the same company, of the Preludes. The former album was an excellent one, far better than a hearing of the Preludes set would have led one to expect. His choice for the waltzes is thus not surprising, and that it was well justified a hearing of the new album will clearly demonstrate. Not a giant among pianists, nor even an especially well known one, Lortat is nevertheless a thoroughly capable performer, and some of his interpretations are genuinely distinguished. Never mawkish or sloppily sentimental, they are graceful and well considered, striking a felicitous balance between delicacy and buoyancy.

In this collection he gives us the following waltzes: F Flat Major, Op. 18; A Flat Major, A Minor and F Major, Op. 34; A Flat Major, Op. 42; D Flat Major, C Sharp Minor and A Flat Major, Op. 64; F Minor and B Minor, Op. 69; and G Flat, F Minor and D Flat Major, Op. 70. The posthumous Waltz in E Minor is also included, so that only the dubious E Major is missing. Recordings of several of the waltzes included in this album can be found scattered here and there throughout the various catalogues, occupying odd sides of sets and the reverse sides of single records. Some of them doubtless have impressive merits, but it is vastly more convenient to have the whole collection between the covers of one album, performed by a reliable pianist.

As for the waltzes themselves, they may not represent Chopin at his greatest, but neither do they show him at his worst, as some of his longer and more pretentious pieces do. The claim that they are "dances of the soul and not of the body" was made by James Gibbons Huneker, who declared that "their animated rhythms, insouciant airs and brilliant, coquettish atmosphere, the true atmosphere of the ballroom, seem to smile at Ehlert's poetic exaggeration." When the subject of the waltz comes up, of course, one thinks instinctively of the greatest of all waltz writers, the man whose name and the waltz are inseparably associated, Johann Strauss the younger. The Chopin waltzes are pianistic, the Strauss orchestral. The former are less hearty, less buoyant than Strauss'. They are more polished, more refined and more melancholy. Schumann said that the Chopin waltzes should be danced by countesses; but anyone with agile legs can leap and bound to the joyous Strauss pieces. Listening to the Chopin pieces, one does not glow and have the feeling of expansion, of well being, of relaxation and ease



that the Strauss waltzes produce; not so robust and broadly sweeping as the latter, the Chopin works are by the same token less compelling and irresistible. But they have an abundance of charm, and some of them are poetic and genuinely beautiful. They range from seductive, languid waltzes to gay, brilliant ones.

Lortat's interpretations are delightful. He has thoroughly absorbed the spirit of these waltzes, and even in some of the more obvious and hackneyed numbers he contrives somehow to bring a pleasing sense of freshness and grace. The recording is very fine. It has the authentic piano sound. The treble is clear and not tinkling, the bass firm and solid, with no suggestion of the confused roaring that is so objectionable in many piano records.

DEBUSSY

C-68033D

and

C-68034D

SUITE BERGAMASQUE. Four sides. Walter Gieseking (Piano). Two 12-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

The recent Columbia release of Debussy's *Arabesques* played by Walter Gieseking, following close on the same artist's superb version of the Beethoven Sonata in D Minor, Op. 31, No. 2, did little to convince collectors that he is a great Debussy interpreter. The disc was poorly recorded and, so far as the reproduction permitted one to judge, indifferently played. It was puzzling that so mediocre a record should immediately follow two magnificent ones, especially since Gieseking is probably greater in Debussy's music than he is in Beethoven's. The mystery was solved when it was discovered that the *Arabesque* record was not a recent recording but that it was, instead, an ancient Homocord mistake, cruelly—and unwisely—hailed out of oblivion by Columbia.

But there is a great difference, immediately noticeable, between that record and these new ones of the *Suite Bergamasque*. These latter, now issued by Columbia, were evidently made at the same time as the Beethoven Sonata discs, for they reveal the same masterly recording. Written in 1890, the *Suite Bergamasque* is not representative of Debussy's piano music at its best, but it contains hints of the composer's later style. It "may be regarded," Edward B. Hill has said, "as an evidence of transition from a stage of relative insipidity to one of indisputable originality." The Suite consists of four movements: Prelude, Minuet, Clair de lune and Passpied. This appears to be the first recording of all four movements, and after hearing Gieseking play them further versions would seem superfluous. All the subtle shading of the artist's memorable interpretation has been faithfully caught by the recorders. The set, offering the rare combination of a perfect rendition flawlessly recorded, can be accounted as one of the most successful piano recordings available.

SCHUBERT

V-7508

MOMENT MUSICAL in A Flat Major, Op. 94, No. 2. Two sides. Ignace Jan Paderewski. One 12-inch disc. \$2.

Columbia released an album containing the Sonatina in D, Op. 137, No. 1, and the *Moments Musicaux*, Op. 94, during the recent Schubert centennial activities, and thus the Andante in A Flat which Paderewski essays here is not new to records. It is a grave, reflective piece, of poignant beauty and charm and

not so gay as some of the other pieces in Op. 94. Paderewski's interpretation is uneven and a little ragged in spots. The recording, though loud and full, is not so clean as it might be.

OPERA



PONCHIELLI

C-GQX10600

to

C-GQX10618

IMPORTED

LA GIOCONDA: *Opera in Four Acts.* Thirty-eight sides.
Italian Operatic Artists, La Scala Chorus and Milan Symphony
Orchestra conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.
Nineteen 12-inch discs in two albums. \$38.

It would be pleasant if some of the other phonograph companies had as much passion for opera as the Italian branch of Columbia. We might then have the long-awaited albums of *Die Meistersinger*, *Das Rheingold*, *Der Rosenkavalier* and others, thus putting an end to a lot of discontented talking and complaining. Italian Columbia, having already issued complete recordings of *Fedora* and *Andrea Chenier*, now gives Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* similar treatment. Whether there will be much of a demand for these two bulky albums, containing nineteen records, cannot be determined in advance, but all the indications point to a rather limited circulation. Quite apart from the merits of the opera, there is the question of the financial outlay. It is hardly likely that many will feel that Ponchielli's work offers sufficient reward to justify them in spending so much money. Nevertheless, Italian Columbia is to be commended for its enterprise; in a period of depression it must require considerable courage to undertake so expensive and difficult a task.

Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-1886) is known in America principally through *La Gioconda*, and recordings of his works have been confined exclusively to this opera. The first performance occurred at La Scala in 1876; later in the same year it was produced at Genoa, with the libretto somewhat altered. In America it was first produced at the Metropolitan in 1883, and since then it has not been exactly neglected. The opera is based on a libretto adapted, by Arrigo Boito, from Victor Hugo's drama *Angelo*. The story need not be retold here, since it is already sufficiently well known, and in any case it can be found very easily in a dozen or more reference books.

This reviewer, haunted with dismal memories of an actual performance and considerably subdued by the spectacle of nineteen records, approached the two formidable albums with some misgivings. It looked like a dull couple of hours. But once started on the thing, it was not nearly so tiresome as it promised to be. Ponchielli's melodies fall gratefully upon the ear, and some of them are not without charm. Though the work as a whole shows signs of fading and age, it stands the ordeal of recording surprisingly well. The orchestration is effective, and there are some rousing choruses. The cast is distributed as follows: *Gioconda*, Giannina



Arangi Lombardi; Laura, Ebe Stignani; La Cieca, Camilla Rota; Enzo Grimaldo, Alessandro Granda; Barnaba, Gaetano Viviani; Alvisè Baodero, Corrado Zambelli; Isepo, Giuseppe Nessi; Zuane, Aristide Baracchi. The chorus is that of La Scala conducted by Vittore Veneziani, and the orchestra is the Milan Symphony conducted by Lorenzo Molajoli.

Many of these names are familiar ones, and they give satisfactory performances. If there are no outstandingly fine singers here, then there are no outstandingly bad ones, so that on the whole the performance is quite up to the high standard already set and admirably maintained by the other Columbia operatic recordings. The Scala chorus sings with fine gusto, and the orchestra, well balanced with the singers, plays with its customary skill. There is no fault to be found with the recording, which is excellent throughout. If you are anxious to have *La Gioconda* on your shelves, then you only need the somewhat stiff price.

SULLIVAN
V-11188
to
V-11199

THE GONDOLIERS: *Comic Opera in Two Acts.* (Gilbert-Sullivan) Twenty-four sides. D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Twelve 12-inch discs in album. Victor Set C-16. \$18.

With the release of this set, Victor has now repressed seven of the nine Gilbert and Sullivan operettas in the H. M. V.-D'Oyly Carte series. The recent *Ruddigore* (reviewed in these pages last month) and the earlier *Yeomen of the Guard* are now the only recordings missing from the Victor lists. *Gondoliers*, like the *Yeomen*, was done several years ago, before the incomparable recordings of *Patience*, *Pinafore* and *Iolanthe*—which with *Ruddigore* are easily the finest recordings in the series—were made.

The twelfth of the Gilbert and Sullivan collaborations, *Gondoliers* was first produced December 7, 1889. During its run the unfortunate quarrel between the pair occurred, and they did not resume their former partnership until after the production, on September 24, 1892, of *Haddon Hall*, in which Sullivan collaborated with Sidney Grundy. *Utopia Limited*, produced the following year, was one of the first results of the reconciliation.

Following a little over a year after the *Yeomen of the Guard*, which departed somewhat from the style the collaborators had employed in their previous works, *Gondoliers* marked a return to their earlier methods. In the work Gilbert is found at the top of his form, and Sullivan's charming score is as dexterous and felicitous as ever. In keeping with the libretto, Sullivan introduces some Italian and Spanish effects. He tries his hand at a waltz, too—the number "Thank you, gallant *gondolieri*,"—and succeeds uncommonly well. Other numbers that demand special attention are: the Marco-Giuseppe duet "We're called *gondolieri*," a fine, rollicking air; Don Alhambra's "I stole the Prince"; the clever "Replying we sing" . . . But there are so many numbers that could be singled out for special praise that a halt will have to be made, before this notice begins to overflow its allotted space. It is sufficient to say that one quality is conspicuously lacking in the work, and that is dullness. But that, of course, could be said of almost any of the G. & S. productions.

If you are excessively critical, you will notice that the recording, good as it is, hasn't the almost unbelievable clarity and refinement of the *Patience*, *Pinafore*, *Iolanthe* and *Ruddigore* sets, but if you are sensible you won't let that fact prevent you from enjoying this fine album. The recording, as a matter of fact, is really very good; if it doesn't quite reach the high standards maintained in the more recent sets, it nevertheless is far superior to the very early *Mikado* and *Trial by Jury* albums. The performance, it scarcely need be said, is lively and skilful. It is to be hoped that Victor will follow this release with the *Yeomen of the Guard* and *Ruddigore*, thus bringing the series in the domestic lists up-to-date. Then we'll be ready for that re-recording of the *Mikado*.



MOZART

V-L899

and

V-L900

IMPORTED

IDOMENEO: *Choruses*. Four sides. Chœurs de Bâle "Basler Kammerchor" conducted by Paul Sacher with orchestra of the Sté d'Etudes Mozartiennes. Two 12-inch discs. \$1.75 each.

If recording activities have been rather slack of late, then there are some alleviating features, and not the least of them is the wholly unexpected interest the recorders have manifested in Mozart's music. Just why they should have picked on Mozart for such tender attention is not exactly clear, but nevertheless there has been a long, exciting stream of records of this master's works, and many of them have contained works that to most of us are not very familiar. Much of this music has been instrumental, so that these records, offering various choruses from the opera *Idomeneo*, make a pleasant change.

Idomeneo has recently been the subject of much discussion because of the recent productions of the work in Vienna and Munich. For the Vienna production, Richard Strauss prepared an entirely new version of the opera, and Wolf-Ferrari performed a similar service, though going about his work in an entirely different manner from Strauss, for the production at Munich. The two versions, critical reports indicated, differed widely, Strauss adding much of his own to the score, while Wolf-Ferrari was more delicate and reverent in his labors. But neither composer, the reports hinted, was able to make of *Idomeneo* anything but a rather dull opera, though it was agreed that much of the music was of surpassing loveliness. The choruses are among the most effective and memorable moments in the score, and some of them are extremely beautiful.

The people recording them for French H. M. V. seem to be new to the gramophone, but if these are their first records they are singularly successful ones. The singing and orchestral playing maintain a high level of excellence, the recording is extremely clear and spacious, and the balance between chorus and orchestra is always accurate. The choruses given here are: *Qual nuovo terrore, Corriamo fuggiamo, Placido e il mar, Nettuno s'onori, O voto tremendo, Godiam la pace, Stupenda vittoria* and *Scenda amor*.

R. STRAUSS

V-9786

SALOME: *Salome and the Head of Jokanaan*. Two sides. Göta Ljungberg (Soprano) and Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Leo Blech. One 12-inch disc. \$1.50.

This disc was reviewed on page 475 of the January, 1931, issue, when Victor issued it on a special Pacific Coast release.



VOCAL

WOLF

V-DB1615

to

V-DB1620

IMPORTED

NINETEEN SONGS: *Begegnung; Lied vom Winde; Auf einer Wanderung; Rat einer Alten; In dem Schatten meiner Locken; Heimweh; Die ihr schwebet; Ach des Knaben Augen; Nun wandre Maria; Gesang Weyla's; Herr was trägt der Boden hier; Auch kleine Dinge; Das verlassene Mägdlein; Wenn du zu den Blumen gehst; Das Ständchen; Und steht Ihr früh am Morgen auf; Ihr jungen Leute; Du denkst mit einem Fädchen; Nein junger Herr.* Elena Gerhardt (Mezzo-Soprano) and Coenraad Van Bos (Piano).

Six 12-inch discs in Hugo Wolf Society Album No. 1. (Subscription set—annual fee 30 shillings.)

Probably to no one who reads these words is the name of Hugo Wolf entirely unknown. But to very few of us have been vouchsafed more than the dry facts of his existence (b. 1860; d. 1903; Austrian composer, chiefly of songs for "voice and pianoforte"). Perchance reading Ernest Newman's book about Wolf and his works, we may have felt an unsatisfied longing to hear this man's remarkable songs—unsatisfied, that is, except to him with sufficient technique to investigate for himself. For rarely could the ordinary concert-goer hear any Wolf songs, and those that he might hear have been confined to a half-score or so of the less difficult that have won a place in the concert repertory.

But now there has been opened to the veriest lay person who follows after music that which has been a closed book even to most musicians. And the miracle has been wrought by means of a toy, a mechanical contrivance, an object of contempt to otherwise liberal minds. The humblest seeker after the exquisite and the lovely in music can now experience for himself the qualities which make Wolf's songs unique: the complete fusion of the voice and pianoforte parts; the scrupulous attention to accentuation; the utter abandon of the musician to the particular poet whose words he was setting; and always, everywhere, the most original, the purest beauty—not the kind which pleases and passes, but the kind which ministers to the soul, which bathes the inner spirit in a bit of eternal light.

For this first album issued by the Gramophone Company for the Hugo Wolf Society, there can be only the highest praise. We were assured in advance that no effort would be spared to make the records as nearly perfect as possible, and the promise has been fulfilled. The songs include seven Mörike songs, six from the Spanish Song Book, five from the Italian, and one Eichendorff setting. They offer almost entirely fresh material for the collector, only three appearing to have been previously recorded. (Only seven of them are found in the Ditson volume of fifty Wolf songs.) The artists are indeed the finest that could be secured. Elena Gerhardt has few peers as a singer of Lieder, and Bos is the great Dutch accompanist. Their previously issued records of Schubert and Brahms songs have estab-

lished them with collectors. The present recordings have caught all the subtleties of their joint interpretation, and the discs themselves are unmarred by the slightest imperfection. There is a twenty-seven page booklet with the set, which gives the words of the songs, a competent English prose translation by Winifred Radford, and a foreword and notes on the songs by Ernest Newman, who stands as the foremost English authority on Wolf.

The reviewer does not know whether there is still opportunity for additional subscribers to secure Volume I, but the high quality of this release should allay any possible doubts concerning the subscription plan, and it is to be hoped that the five hundred subscribers to the first set may be doubled by December, 1932, when payment for the second annual album will be due. (Communications should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Hugo Wolf Society, care the Gramophone Co., Ltd., 363 Oxford Street, London, W. 1.)

And in the meantime we might offer a prayer that, if the apparent plan of having different singers record successive sets is followed, the singer for the next group be John McCormack, who is devoted (privately) to Wolf's songs, and whose artistry should produce a set the equal of the present one.

RALPH W. SNYDER

CANTELOUBE
C-50321D

SONGS OF THE AUVERGNE: *Bresairola* (Lullaby); *Malurous qu'o uno fenno* (Bourrée); *Two Bourrées—N'aï pas ièn de moi*; *Lo Calhé*. (Arr. Canteloube) Two sides. Madeleine Grey (Soprano) with orchestra conducted by Elie Cohen. One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Collectors will be grateful to Columbia for having issued another disc of Canteloube's arrangements of *Songs of the Auvergne*. Madeleine Grey's previous record of other songs from the same collection—reviewed in the November, 1931, issue—will be remembered. The present disc is similar in character to the earlier release. The Lullaby is somewhat melancholy, but the other pieces—especially the one labelled *Unhappy He Who Has a Wife*, an observation which may arouse the secret sympathy of some—are very lively. These are delightful songs, the value of which are enhanced by the effective orchestral accompaniments. That Canteloube, in arranging these folk songs for voice and orchestra—by no means an easy job,—has succeeded in preserving their original simplicity and unaffected charm is surely no small tribute to his taste and musicianship. Voice and instruments merge simply and naturally, and the orchestration is full of felicities. Those seeking something departing from the beaten path could scarcely do better than investigate this disc. Nor should the earlier one be forgotten.

V-1557

MASCHENKA. One side and
DOWN THE PETERSKY. One side. Feodor Chaliapine (Bass). One 10-inch disc. \$1.50.

Both pieces are folk songs. There is no accompaniment in *Maschenka*, but in *Down the Petersky* a large balalaika orchestra supports the singer. Both songs are rendered superbly. The words, of course, are in Russian and therefore, to most of us, incomprehensible, but Chaliapine's singing is so expressive that a knowledge of the text hardly matters. The disc is well recorded.



RELEASES FOR THE MONTH OF

M A Y

JOHANN STRAUSS WALTZES—ALBUM NO. 36

THE OPERA ORCHESTRA, BERLIN-CHARLOTTENBURG

JULIUS PRÜWER, Conductor

- | | | | | |
|-------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| 90222 | { | BLUE DANUBE—Parts I and II
(An der schönen, blauen Donau) | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 90223 | { | TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS—Parts I and II
(Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald) | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 90224 | { | TALES FROM THE VIENNA WOODS—Part III
(Geschichten aus dem Wiener Wald)
VOICES OF SPRING (Frühlingsstimmen) | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
| 90225 | { | ROSES FROM THE SOUTH—Parts I and II
(Rosen aus dem Süden) | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |

THE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA, BERLIN

JULIUS PRÜWER, Conductor

- | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 90226 | { | EMPEROR WALTZ—Parts I and II
(Kaiser-Walzer) | } | Recorded in Europe
PRICE \$1.50 |
|-------|---|---|---|------------------------------------|

Brunswick Records

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BRANCHES AND DISTRIBUTORS IN PRINCIPAL CITIES

LOEWE
C-G9053M

{ **DIE UHR.** One side and
TOM DER REIMER. One side. Richard Tauber (Tenor)
with orchestra conducted by Ernst Hauke.
One 12-inch disc. \$2.



Apart from the fact that this disc will delight Tauber's admirers, it may serve another useful purpose. It may lure some unwary people into investigating other recordings of Loewe's ballads. If Tauber's rendition of *Tom der Reimer* (presumably cut, though we have no score to verify the assumption) pleases you, then listen to Ivar Andresen's vastly superior Columbia recording of the same piece (both sides of C-L2372). Tauber's rather sentimentalized version is also provided with a clumsy orchestral accompaniment which is somewhat coarsely recorded. In the Andresen disc there is an excellent piano accompaniment by Dr. Franz Hallasch. . . . As for *Die Uhr* (The Clock), in which an analogy is drawn between life and a timepiece, we are not familiar with a satisfactory recording of the piece, though there are several discs listed in the foreign catalogues which we have not heard. Tauber's cannot be recommended with much enthusiasm. Here there is another far from edifying orchestral accompaniment.

SCHUMANN
C-G4065M

{ **DER NUSSBAUM.** (Schumann) One side and
AUFTRÄGE. One side. Lotte Lehmann (Soprano) with piano
accompaniment. One 10-inch disc. \$1.25.

This disc, originally a Parlophone record now repressed by Columbia, is notable among other things for the fact that it has a splendid piano accompaniment instead of an orchestral background. This is contrary to the usual procedure of the Parlophone recorders, who commonly provide their singers with orchestral support even when the piano would be far more effective. Both songs are lovely, and Lotte Lehmann sings them exquisitely. This is one of her most successful discs from every point of view: music, interpretation, and recording are all eminently satisfying.

VIOLIN



BACH
KREISLER
C-50322D

{ **SUITE IN E: Prelude.** (Bach) One side and
RECITATIVE and SCHERZO-CAPRICE. (Kreisler) One
side. René Benedetti (Violin). One 12-inch disc. \$1.25.

Both of these pieces are played without accompaniment. The Bach, to the average listener, will perhaps be somewhat dull; it is more for the musician. The Kreisler selection, after the slow Recitative, is very lively, though not of much consequence. Benedetti plays capably, and the recording is excellent.

—New Issues—
Columbia
Masterworks*

CHOPIN: WALTZES, FOR PIANOFORTE. At last the delightful Chopin Waltzes are available in complete form. James Huneker said of these waltzes that "they are dances for the soul, not the body," which happily worded description preludes his further statement that they are "altogether sprightly, delightful specimens of the composer's careless, vagrant and happiest moods." We predict that Mr. Lortat's splendid performance of these favorite pieces will be one of the most successful Masterworks Sets so far issued.



Masterworks Set No. 171

Chopin: Waltzes, for Pianoforte. Robert Lortat. In Ten Parts, on Five Twelve-Inch Records. \$7.50 with Album.

DEBUSSY: SUITE BERGAMASQUE, FOR PIANO. The Suite Bergamasque is among Debussy's early writings, much more simple in form than a majority of his later works and is, throughout, a composition of the rarest individuality and charm. Its four short movements or episodes form a perfected expression of the composer's elusive, original creative formulas. It is one of the most entertaining and enjoyable, simply as music alone, of all his piano pieces, which is saying much. The recording is perfect, and Mr. Gieseeking at his extraordinary best.

Debussy: Suite Bergamasque, for Piano. Walter Gieseeking. In Four Parts, on Two Twelve-Inch Records, Nos. 68033-D to 68034-D. Each, \$1.50.

PIERNÉ: CYDALISE ET LE CHÈVRE-PIED (CYDALISE AND THE SATYR). BALLET SUITE FOR ORCHESTRA. The gracefully fantastic little ballet suite, Cydalise and the Satyr, is one of the most ingenious of modern orchestral works, of technical cleverness which charms the connoisseur and of sufficient lightness of melodic structure to please the layman. Few have ever succeeded so well in combining romance and myth. The scene is laid in the sumptuous French court of the seventeenth century, into which is introduced a group of the fabled satyrs and nymphs of ancient Greece. The amusing opening number, Entrance of the Little Fauns, a gem of musical extravaganza, is already well known in this country. The other movements are equally stimulating and enticing; there is a demonstration by an ancient satyr to his class of young pupils in the art of playing the pipes of Pan and a dancing lesson in one of the Grecian modes for a class of student nymphs, the suite closing with a spirited finale.

Pierné: Cydalise et le Chèvre-Pied (Cydalise and the Satyr) Ballet Suite for Orchestra. Gabriel Pierné and Orchestra of the Concerts Colonne, Paris. In Four Parts, on Two Twelve-Inch Records, Nos. G-68035-D† to G-68036-D†. Each, \$1.50.



"Magic Notes"

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† These records are offered for sale in U. S. A. and Canada only

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Columbia Phonograph Co., Inc., New York City



"Magic Notes"

CHORAL



CARPENTER

V-1559

and

V-1560

SONG OF FAITH. Four Sides. Chicago A Cappella Choir,
Organ and Victor Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nobel
Cain. Two 10-inch discs. \$1.50 each.

Like the Skryabin works reviewed under Orchestra this month, these records are among the first releases of a new series of recordings, done by a new process. They were recorded only a few weeks ago, and like the Skryabin records, too, they arrived at the last moment, so that this notice will necessarily have to be based on a very hurried hearing of the work. John Alden Carpenter is one of the outstanding American composers, but this is the first time that any of the phonograph companies have shown any recognition of the fact. We hope in a future issue to publish an article on Mr. Carpenter, so that there will be no need to review his past achievements here. Commissioned early last year by the National Committee of the Washington Bicentennial to write a composition dedicated to the occasion, Carpenter wrote this work to his own text. It has been broadcast over the radio by Walter Damrosch, and recently several leading American orchestras have included it on their programs. It is altogether fitting and appropriate, then, that the RCA Victor Company should have made it available in permanent form, thus honoring Washington's bicentennial and Mr. Carpenter and pleasing—one hopes—the record-buying public.

Mr. Carpenter has this to say of his composition: "In the writing of this work, I have come to a new realization of the priceless inheritance that has come down to us from George Washington. I have felt, more than ever before, that the enduring value of this inheritance is based not primarily on his military genius, or his contribution to the arts of government, but on the selfless integrity of his character.

"It is from that character that we inherit the Great American Dream,—the dream which has sustained us through our storms and trials, and which at this very moment we must strive in deepest sincerity to recapture. For the whole world is beset by a dangerous psychology of defeat which for us is but the modern counterpart of the snows of Valley Forge. And it is for our country now to raise its eyes in the Faith of its founders, and lead the way out.

"And, therefore, if my *Song of Faith* can succeed in lighting one single candle of re-affirmation, I shall be content."

Naturally, in preparing such a work, Mr. Carpenter had to keep in mind the fact that it must have a wide appeal, that it must please large audiences, not all of whom could properly be called music lovers. The music is therefore very easy and pleasant to listen to and presents no difficulties for even the most timid ears. But it is by no means a merely superficial, mawkish piece of musical patriotism,

New RCA Victor Releases

MUSICAL MASTERPIECE SERIES

Concerto No. 1 in G Minor (opus 26) by Max Bruch. Played by Yehudi Menuhin and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Landon Ronald, on three double-faced Victor Records, Nos. 7509-7511 . . . and in automatic sequence, Nos. 7512-7514. In Album M-124 with explanatory booklet. List price, \$6.50.

Record collectors the world over will welcome this album exploiting the genius of the youthful Menuhin, whose recent concert tour was an outstanding feature of the current season. It also affords the opportunity of hearing at will a work prominent in literature for the violin . . . one of great beauty . . . a lasting monument to the composer . . . which until now has not been available on records.

The Gondoliers (Gilbert and Sullivan). Performed by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company under the personal supervision of Rupert D'Oyly Carte on twelve double-faced Victor Records, Nos. 11188-11199 . . . and in automatic sequence, Nos. 11200-11211. In Album C-16 with libretto. List price, \$18.00.

Here is another of the delightful Gilbert and Sullivan operas sung in traditional style by the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. Charming music . . . witty text . . . splendid voices, make this album one of the most entertaining musical treats imaginable.

RED SEAL RECORDS

Moment Musical in A Flat Major (opus 94, No. 2) by Franz Schubert. Played by Ignace Jan Paderewski on Victor Record No. 7508. List price, \$2.00.

Down the Petersky and Maschenka. Sung by Feodor Chaliapin on Victor Record No. 1557. List price, \$1.50.

Salomé (Richard Strauss). *Ah! Du wolltest mich nicht deinem Mund* (Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to

kiss thy mouth) and

Dein Leib war eine Elfenbeinsäule (Thy Body was a Column of Ivory). Sung with orchestral accompaniment, by Mme. Göta Ljungberg on Victor Record No. 9786. List price, \$1.50.

The Bartered Bride — Overture (Smetana) played by the Chicago Orchestra conducted by Frederick Stock on Victor Record No. 1555. List price, \$1.50.



R C A VICTOR COMPANY, Inc.
Camden, New Jersey

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in the less pleasant sense of the word. *Song of Faith*, on the whole, is a dignified and expressive piece of music, not without its impressive moments. The chorus parts are stirring, and the orchestral portions are full of felicities, such as the ingenious use of the tune *Yankee Doodle*, which appears in various guises throughout the work. Near the close there is a spoken part—in actual performances, we understand, supposed to be delivered through a loudspeaker—here given by Mr. Carpenter himself, who was present at the recording of his work. This spoken part consists of excerpts from Washington's writings, but aside from the interest attached to hearing Mr. Carpenter's voice, it seems the weakest and least effective part of the composition.



The recording and performance call for high praise. The Chicago A Cappella Choir is obviously a beautifully trained organization, and it is to be hoped that we shall soon have more of its work on records. The orchestra is excellent, and the recording is a distinguished piece of work, notable for its clarity, realism and just balance.

BACH
V-C2252
IMPORTED

ST. MATTHEW PASSION: *Recit*—"Now from the Sixth Hour"; *Chorale*—"If I Should E'er Forsake Thee"; *Recit*—"Now at That Feast"; *Chorus*—"Let Him Be Crucified." Two sides. Westminster Abbey Special Choir conducted by E. Bullock. One 12-inch disc. \$1.75.

Unlike the B Minor Mass, the *Matthew Passion* has yet to appear in a complete recording. Slowly, though, a representative group of discs from the work is appearing. Brunswick issued two fine ones by the Bruno Kittel Choir of Berlin over a year ago; and last Fall, on its special list of foreign repressings, Victor released two additional records. This disc, by the Westminster Abbey Special Choir under Dr. Bullock, gives two choruses and two recitatives from the work that have not, to our knowledge, been elsewhere recorded. The soloists are anonymous, but their singing is very good. The choir, obviously well-drilled, is recorded with great clarity and volume. It is too bad that the accompaniment is by an organ and not an orchestra.

MISCELLANEOUS



SCARLATTI
COUPERIN
V-DA1130
IMPORTED

SONATA NO. 9: *Pastorale*. (Scarlatti) One side and
LE ROSSIGNOL EN AMOUR. (François Couperin le
Grand) One side. Wanda Landowska (Harpsichord).
One 10-inch disc. \$2.

The Sonata is by Domenico Scarlatti, son of Alessandro. Alessandro is remembered today chiefly because of his operas, while Domenico's fame rests on his harpsichord music, of which he wrote an imposing amount. The lively piece given here is played with skill and delicacy. The Couperin selection, on the reverse side, is also delightful, and the rendition is similarly proficient. The recording is a notable piece of work.

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More Recording Suggestions

Editor, *Disques*:

I wish to second Mr. Fuller's suggestion (in the April issue) that Scriabin's *Divine Poem* be recorded, preferably in Koussevitzky's magnificent reading. And would it be too much to ask for a continuation of Stokowski's splendid Bach series—to include his orchestration of the Chaconne, the great G Minor Fantasia and Fugue, and some of the Chorale-Preludes: *Aus der Tiefe noth!* and *Wachet auf?* They would be a wonderful addition to one of the most notable series of recordings in the history of the phonograph. And there would probably be a good deal more demand for such recordings than there is for such things as his new version of the *1812!* While on the subject, why couldn't Koussevitzky be allowed to record the delightful Concerto in D Major of C. P. E. Bach (in Steinberg's arrangement) which received such high praise from the critics when he played it last month? This little piece (which ought to fit on two discs very conveniently), with its heavenly slow movement between two lively ones, couldn't help being immensely popular with the lovers of the classics, as well as being of incalculable historical and educational value.

PARKER W. PERRY

Melrose, Mass.

Edison's "Greatest Gift"

Editor, *Disques*:

Mr. Darrell's essay, *Wizard's Music*, is very interesting. Extremely apposite also is the comment subsequently engendered by this writer's appraisal of the inventor of the phonograph. Regarding a phase of the scientific inheritance left us by Edison which seems to have been smothered unduly in the course of much literary diagnosis, I take leave to quote from the obituary of Thomas A. Edison which I had the privilege of writing for the *Musical Courier*, October 24, 1932 . . .

"Popular conception has it that the inventor's greatest gift to music was the phonograph. This is not exactly so. Strange as it may seem, Edison, when he perfected the incandescent light, endowed this machine with the means by which it could later arise from its lowly status as a toy and become truly a

supreme reproducing instrument of musical and other sound. And through the results and discoveries supplied by the first practical electric light, radio broadcasting and reception in the highly improved condition common today was made possible.

"Fifty years have elapsed since Edison, working on his incandescent lamp, made a discovery now recognized as the most epochal in all his eventful career. He found a faint stream of electricity from the hot filament flowing across the vacuum. Here the basic phenomenon of electronics stood revealed.

"The great inventor was occupied with other investigations and problems and did not pursue what later became known as the 'Edison Effect.' A generation passed and this scientific curiosity, this feeble electron action, was harnessed and put to work. DeForest had experimented with it and ultimately perfected his revolutionizing three-electrode tube whose 'grid' control opened up new worlds of possibilities in communication, sound recording, reproduction and amplification.

"Directly a host of inventors, physicists and engineers rushed in until today a far-flung army numbering thousands of workers is engaged in all the diverse fields of electronic application, in laboratories around the world. The 1883 'Edison Effect,' discovered through the invention of the electric lamp in 1879, is the main trunk of an illustrious family tree . . .

"For many years after he had shouted the first words to be recorded and reproduced by the phonograph (the nursery rhyme: 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'), Edison looked upon his creation primarily as a toy—later in the light of the dictaphone. . . . Certainly he never thought of the vast liberating possibilities that music would ultimately achieve through his instrument. Less yet did he recognize the electric light as the forerunner of the greatest scientific gift (musical instruments and acoustics excepted) to the profession of Bach. . . ."

It is well to think of Edison every time we purchase a tube for our phonograph's amplification unit.

RICHARD GILBERT

New York, N. Y.

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NEW MUSIC

SONATA for Piano, Op. 47. By Ernst Toch. New York: Associated Music Publishers (Schott Edition). \$2.50.

SONATA for Violin and Piano, Op. 44. By Ernst Toch. New York: Associated Music Publishers (Schott Edition). \$2.50.

SONATA for 'Cello and Piano, Op. 50. By Ernst Toch. New York: Associated Music Publishers (Schott Edition). \$2.50.

In spite of the expressed admiration of the composer for the works of Schönberg there is very little of the older composer's influence discernible in these works. The Piano Sonata especially looks and sounds more like Hindemith's little piano pieces. In fact, the best technical preparation for it would be a diligent study of Hindemith's Three Etudes, Op. 37. There is the same vivacity of spirit and predilection for contrapuntal virtuosity. The thematic material and melodic lines are easily distinguishable and that partly accounts for the popular success of Toch's music on the concert stage. The average listener feels that here at last is one composer of the advanced "atonal" school whose music he can appreciate and listen to without undue brain fatigue.

PRÉLUDES for Piano. By Olivier Messiaen. Philadelphia: Elkan-Vogel (Durand). \$4.

The immense variety and richness of modern piano literature ought to make a reviewer timid in seconding the publishers' views in their announcement, on the publication of this set, that "this is the most interesting book of Préludes since Debussy," strongly tempted as he might be to do so. That Messiaen, although unknown here, is no mere beginner in the art of composition a glance at the music will show. It is strongly Debussyan, impressionistic, atmospheric and peculiarly pianistic in the sense that the harmonic progressions and effects are particularly suited to the timbre and technic of the piano; transcriptions for other instruments would be unthinkable. Especially fine is the number entitled *Les sons impalpables du rêve*. . . . The pianissimo chords in high register for the right hand accompanying a soft slow melody for the left do suggest impalpable

sounds heard in a dream. The last number of the set, *Un reflet dans le vent*, will stand comparison with Debussy's *Reflet dans l'eau*. There is no doubt that Messiaen is a subtle harmonist of first order, and his further musical output will be awaited with interest.

KLEINE SONATE for Piano. By Daniel Ruyneman. New York: Associated Music Publishers (Universal Edition). \$1.50.

In this little sonata in one movement the composer dispenses not only with the key-signature but also with the time-signature, since the rhythmic freedom of the motives and their development is so great that it would almost necessitate the placing of a new time-signature near every measure. The sixteenth-note has to be considered as the unit of time-measurement here, since each measure contains an unequal number of them. The sonata begins with a lively, boisterous theme occupying nine measures, fragments of which are skilfully developed throughout the whole work. It is dedicated to the virtuoso Walter Gieseking, in whose repertory it is included, and it undoubtedly is one of the finest examples of the ultra-modern school of pianistic writing.

QUARTET for Strings. By Georges Hugon. Philadelphia: Elkan-Vogel Co. (Durand). \$2.80.

As a pupil of Paul Dukas, Hugon shows the influence of the master in adhering closely to the old sonata form and in the conciseness and clarity of his themes. The main vigorous lively subject with which the Quartet opens undergoes many transformations throughout the first movement and is very skilfully manipulated together with the subsidiary themes. It also appears as a very slow, peaceful melody at the very end of the last movement and brings the work to an effective conclusion. The sense of kinship between the themes and movements, the unity of design that is felt throughout the Quartet, and the colorful polyphonic progression of the parts ought to make this Quartet a favorite among chamber music groups.

MAURICE B. KATZ

BOOKS

MOZART. By Marcia Davenport. New York: *Charles Scribner's Sons*. \$3.50.

Before writing this book, the author tells us, she spent considerable time visiting the various cities in which Mozart lived at one time or another, the houses where he dwelt, the theatres in which he appeared, the libraries and museums containing valuable information relating to the subject. Several noted authorities, both on Mozart and his period, were consulted, and the author had access to the Constanze Mozart-Nissen documents. Herself the daughter of Alma Gluck, she was thus brought up in a musical family and so has the proper background for undertaking such a task as writing a biography of Mozart. Her book is therefore carefully considered, based on well established facts and, all in all, obviously the result of solid research. Moreover, according to the publishers, it is the first American biography of Mozart.

Mozart the man was not the possessor of any extraordinarily interesting and vivid qualities. His life was made exceptional because of his gifts, because it offered the spectacle of a fabulously talented and accomplished prodigy flooring musical Europe with his feats, because, after writing some of the world's greatest music in an incredibly short time, he tragically died at a premature age—though Ernest Newman wonders whether Mozart perhaps didn't die at precisely the proper time. But his life didn't present the odd and curious things that Wagner's, for example, did. Wagner's character, with its many baffling contradictions, its odd mixture of the attractive and repellent, its turbulence and adventure, will always be of absorbing interest to the psychologist as well as the musician, who both are still speculating how a man could be so completely petty and tawdry one moment and write deathless music the next. It is not strange that the literature about Wagner the man is extremely bulky and that additional volumes on various phases of the subject are constantly appearing. But one's curiosity about Mozart generally begins and ends with his music. The man, apart from his work, was little more

than commonplace, was, indeed, even rather soft and flabby, unresourceful, bewildered and incapable of independent and uncompromising decisions.

He tamely submitted to his father's wishes, and though he often cautiously toyed with rebellion, he never could bring himself to the point of achieving complete and satisfying independence from the parental yoke. He was profoundly shocked at Voltaire's impiety, and wrote to his father, from Paris, that the "godless arch-rascal, Voltaire, has died like a dog, like a beast." It is greatly to Marcia Davenport's credit that, though she is obviously thoroughly in sympathy with her subject, she doesn't try to pump more into Mozart than is already there. She doesn't attribute any scandalous vices to him in order to prod the interest of the cigar- and drug-store readers or saddle him with resounding, impossible virtues in order to please the professionally virtuous who have tried to make an impeccable saint of him. The figure that emerges from her pages is a recognizable, human one, far more interesting than the unbelievable creature that so many previous biographers have presented us.

Wherever possible, she quotes from the authentic sources; where there are gaps she fills in herself, but not many of her essays at "legitimate assumption" are improbable. The author has a good grasp of character and succeeds in rounding out a plausible picture of the composer. Now and then she indulges in the luxury of imaginary conversation, indicated by single quotation marks; such passages add little to the value of the book, but they are not objectionable. The book is addressed, the author makes it plain, primarily to the layman, but it should interest musicians as well. Her style is simple but lively and makes very pleasant reading. Tasteful binding, clear printing and a good index round out a praiseworthy achievement, one which succeeds admirably in presenting Mozart as an understandable human being, better, indeed, than any other book with which this reviewer is familiar.

